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THE EYE

THE INDEPENDENT

Friday 3 April 1998 45p (R50p) No 3,575

Government scientists warn of food poison risk in burgers

By Jeremy Laurence and Madeline Chambers

BURGERS BOUGHT from some restaurants, mobile vans and pubs are not being properly cooked putting customers at risk of food poisoning, public health officials say.

A survey by government scientists has identified burgers as a chief source of infection, with *E. coli* O157

one of the most fearsome bugs which can cause serious illness and deaths. *E. coli* O157 was responsible for the world's worst food poisoning outbreak in Scotland in 1996 in which 19 people died. The bacterium has emerged in the last two decades and caused earlier outbreaks in Lancashire and in the United States and Japan.

Scientists from the Government's

Public Health Laboratory Service who studied 85 sporadic (unlinked) cases of infection with the bacterium found beefburgers were the likeliest source. An exception was those bought from a national fast food chain which "ensured thorough cooking of the meat from top and bottom simultaneously for a fixed pre-determined time governed by a timer attached to the grill".

The chain involved is not identified in the report, published in the *Lancet*, but inquiries disclosed that it is McDonald's. However, because fewer people ate at other restaurants the researchers were unable to show statistically whether their burgers were safe or not.

A spokesman for the laboratory service said: "The message from this study is that people who are eating

out should be prepared to send back under-cooked burgers."

The researchers visited nine premises and found a variety of cooking methods. In one restaurant, part of a national chain (not McDonald's), cooking times for the burgers were laid down but there was no obvious method of adhering to them. In another, part of a restaurant chain, cooking times were laid down but

when followed by the researchers the burgers still came out pink in the middle (under-cooked). A pub and a privately owned burger bar used approximate cooking times.

The study also found a link between the *E. coli* infection and eating cooked sliced meats from caterers - but not when they were bought from butchers and supermarkets. The researchers blame "food handling er-

rors" by caterers which were avoided by producers and retailers.

A spokesman for Burger King said yesterday: "We think we do exactly what is stated in the study - cooking from above and below with a timer and with checks of the temperature when the burger is fully cooked." Wimpy said: "We ensure our own quality checks are carried out and we are confident of our own procedures."

World leaders 'were target of Irish bomb'

By David McKelvey and Colin Brown

A **HUGE** republican bomb intercepted by Gardaí at a port near Dublin early yesterday may have been destined for an attack on the Asian-Europe summit in London, according to an Irish prime minister.

Such a bombing would have been without precedent if it had gone ahead, since the summit is being attended by 25 prime ministers from Europe and Asia. No gathering of world leaders has ever faced such an attack. The suggestion will mean even tighter security for the VIPs who have gathered in London.

The bomb, in a BMW car, was seized at the port of Dun Laoghaire by Irish anti-terrorist police. Its driver was questioning to take it on board a ferry to the Welsh port of Holyhead.

"There was early speculation that its intended target was the Grand National at Aintree, but last night the *Irish Times*, Bertie Ahern, said: "Whether it was going to Aintree, or more likely the Asem summit where I'll be attending, it is tremendous that it's been thwarted."

Both the British and Irish governments regard the device as intended to disrupt the Northern Ireland talks which are due to reach a conclusion next Thursday. Both were adamant yesterday that they would not be deflected by any such attacks.

Irish security sources yesterday blamed the bomb on an as yet unnamed breakaway republican group which has access to IRA technology. The group is believed to be responsible for a number of incidents, including two mortar attacks on security forces in Northern Ireland.

The new republican grouping is thought to be headed by dissident IRA members who resigned from the mainstream

organisation in November last in opposition to Sinn Féin's peace process strategy.

The group was at first not taken seriously by some sources, but in recent times it has come to be regarded as a major threat. Its intention of attacking a target in England, possibly the



Ahern: 'tremendous'

summit meeting, evidently means it is even more ambitious than had been thought.

The multi-party talks process is meanwhile expected to enter its final phase today when the chairman, former US senator George Mitchell, presents a draft agreement to the parties. The plan is for him to hear their responses to it and, over the weekend, prepare a more settled document for presentation on Monday.

Although Mr Mitchell is to be the author of the plan, he is drawing it up with input from all the parties involved and in particular from the British and Irish governments. Intensive negotiations are scheduled in the run-up to Thursday's deadline.

Mr Ahern has toughened his public line in recent days, last night saying he would be making no further compromises and calling on the Ulster Unionist leader, David Trimble, to make moves if there was to be a deal. This followed his warn-

ing on Wednesday that he wanted a strong new north-south institution and was not interested in "an ad hoc chat show".

The Dun Laoghaire bomb was found in a white BMW queuing for a Stena Line ferry. Five people were detained by Irish police, who surrounded the car, together with a second red BMW, after surveillance. A Garda spokesman said: "In the car were 980lbs of home-made explosives. It had detonators, timing devices and boosters."

The Cabinet was briefed on the security threat although government sources refused to discuss details. The Tory spokesman on Ulster, Andrew Mackay, said it was "immensely serious - a bomb of this sophistication isn't just a minor splinter group. It has to be a mainstream terrorist organisation and undoubtedly at this crucial time in the talks there is a real risk of dangerous terrorist attacks."

Tony Blair was last night sticking to his 9 April deadline for completing the talks, in spite of the terrorist threat to try to disrupt the process.

With tensions mounting, Mr Blair last night held more crisis talks with Mr Ahern in London in an attempt to reach a compromise over the cross-border bodies and repair the damage from their failure to reach agreement in Downing Street talks 24 hours earlier.

Mr Blair was said by Ulster Unionists to have been "furious" at the undiplomatic language used by Mr Ahern before their meeting on Wednesday.

Downing Street yesterday played down the reports of a rift between London and Dublin, insisting that they were looking for a way forward together through the differences over the cross-border bodies.

Wright inquiry, page 2
Donald MacIntyre, page 21



Muhyideen al-Sharif, Hamas's top bombmaker, who was shot at the weekend, being taken for burial in el-Bireh, on the West Bank, yesterday. He was implicated in attacks that killed scores of Israelis but Benjamin Netanyahu has denied Israel killed him. Reports, page 15 Photograph: Reuters

British government supplied Saddam with anthrax

By Fran Abrams Political Correspondent

ANTHRAX in Saddam Hussein's biological armoury came from the British government's own centre at Porton Down in Wiltshire, MPs were told yesterday.

Menzies Campbell, the Liberal Democrats' defence spokesman, claimed that strains of the bacteria were sold during the late 1980s to an American company which sold them on to the Iraqis.

The Ministry of Defence last night denied involvement, and said the material had come from a Department of Health facility next to its Porton Down site.

Mr Campbell said that the

lives of British soldiers had been at risk in the Gulf from weapons developed by their own military establishments.

In a Commons debate, he cited an investigative report in the *Washington Post* which said the Iraqis had also tried, without success, to buy the deadly pathogens directly from Porton Down in 1988. However, the *American Type Culture Collection* (ATCC) had been able to buy them and pass them on.

The article said the head of Britain's germ warfare programme had obtained the materials from an academic researcher and sent it to an aide who later sold it to the American repository in Rockville,

Maryland. It was well known at the time that ATCC was re-exporting pathogens freely, Mr Campbell told MPs, and obtaining materials from the firm was a simple matter.

Its customers had to submit a written request on headed notepaper, agree to accept responsibility for the material, demonstrate scientific literacy in a short telephone conversation and pay a \$78 fee - about £46 at today's exchange rates.

"Recent events when the UK forces were deployed to the Gulf, where their lives might have been at risk show the price is currently being paid for the failures of the Conservative government in this matter," he said.



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Today's news

Road-rage driver jailed for double killing
A FORMER rally driver was yesterday sentenced to 12 years in jail for killing a couple in a road-rage attack. Page 3

Zoe's stepfather guilty of murder
THE STEPFATHER of schoolgirl Zoe Evans was yesterday found guilty of her murder. Page 5

Prescriptions blamed for addicts' deaths
TOUGHER measures to curb the prescription of methadone by private doctors was urged yesterday as the death toll rises among addicts using the drug. Page 9

3Rs league table for sixth forms
A league table for standards in the three Rs in sixth forms was proposed yesterday by a government adviser. Page 7

Clinton visits African slave island
PRESIDENT CLINTON yesterday went to the island from which two million Africans were shipped as slaves. Page 13

Japan economy 'on brink of collapse'

By Richard Lloyd Parry in Tokyo and Steve Crawshaw

THE head of Sony yesterday warned that the Japanese economy was "on the verge of collapsing". If the situation continues to decline, he said, this would have "a damaging effect on the world economy".

In a bitter personal attack, Norio Ohga, chairman of the Japanese electronics giant, compared the Japanese prime minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto, to Herbert Hoover, the American president who led the country into the Great Depression in 1929. "Hoover was saying things too similar to

what Hashimoto has been saying recently," he said at a reception in Tokyo to mark the beginning of the financial year.

Mr Ohga's attack came as Asian leaders, including Mr Hashimoto, gathered in London for an Asia-Europe summit that began with an informal dinner at Downing Street last night, and officially opens today.

Economic relations between the EU and the Asian countries will top the agenda, including ways of seeking to contain the effects of the financial crisis that has rocked the region's markets.

The British government is keen to put hiccups over Hong Kong behind it. There was talk

yesterday of how Tony Blair was "fascinated" and "full of admiration" for the plans of Zhu Rongji, the economic reformer who is the new Chinese prime minister. The atmosphere at the first EU-China summit this week was said to have had "a really constructive feel".

Not everybody will have been reassured. Three Nobel prizewinners were among those who addressed an "alternative reception" in London yesterday, which was co-sponsored by *The Independent*.

The reception, for "the un-represented peoples of Asia" was hosted by the actress Joanna Lumley, who called on

the Government "to show us the change we are still waiting to see". The organisers included human rights groups focusing on Burma, Indonesia and Tibet. Aung San Suu Kyi, the Burmese pro-democracy leader, sent a video message which had been smuggled out of Burma.

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Leading article, page 20
Sony warning, page 23

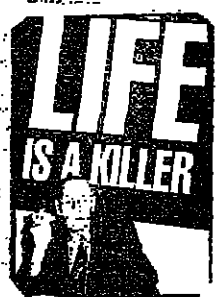


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5-SECTION
INDEPENDENT**

- A night at a voodoo wedding
- Women who paint themselves THE MAGAZINE
- The Turks and Caicos islands — forgotten Britain in the Caribbean TIME OFF

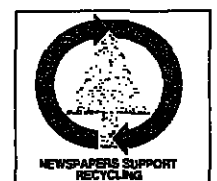
FROM MONDAY

■ Exclusive series: Drugs, guns, knives, pornography... the extraordinary life of William Burroughs, father of The Beats



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Gun riddle in probe on Wright murder

By David McKittrick
Ireland Correspondent

A FULL OFFICIAL inquiry into the shooting of the loyalist leader Billy Wright, who was killed within the Maze prison, has failed to establish how two firearms that were used in the attack were smuggled into the jail.

An inquiry team headed by Martin Narey, a senior figure from the prison service of England and Wales, made 59 recommendations for the tightening of procedures in the Maze, which it described as a uniquely difficult prison.

The fact that the inquiry has not discovered how the guns got into the jail, which ranks as the United Kingdom's highest-security penal institution, will provide a continuing security headache for the authorities.

Although security was found to be potentially defective on so many fronts, the authorities made it clear that no resignations are to follow the report, which in several instances praises the work of its staff.

The report reveals that in searches following the shooting, staff discovered illicit items including screwdrivers, Stanley knives, pliers, paramilitary uniforms, mobile phones and pornographic videos.

In relation to the escape of Liam Averill, an IRA prisoner who walked out dressed as a woman following a visitors' Christmas party, the report concluded there was "a general sloppiness in procedures" which he was able to exploit.

The report disclosed that Billy Wright had been transferred to the Maze from another prison because the authorities feared the loyalist terrorist group he founded, the Loyalist Volunteer Force, might embark on a campaign of violence in support of his segregation.

They were further worried

that he "might martyr himself" by going on a hunger strike timed to conclude at the time of the annual Orange parade controversy at Drumcree, Co Armagh.

The report concluded it had not been unreasonable for Wright and other LVF prisoners to be placed in the same Maze H-block as inmates from the republican Irish National Liberation Army.

It said the prison governor, after speaking to the leaders of both factions, believed neither "would launch a first strike against the other."

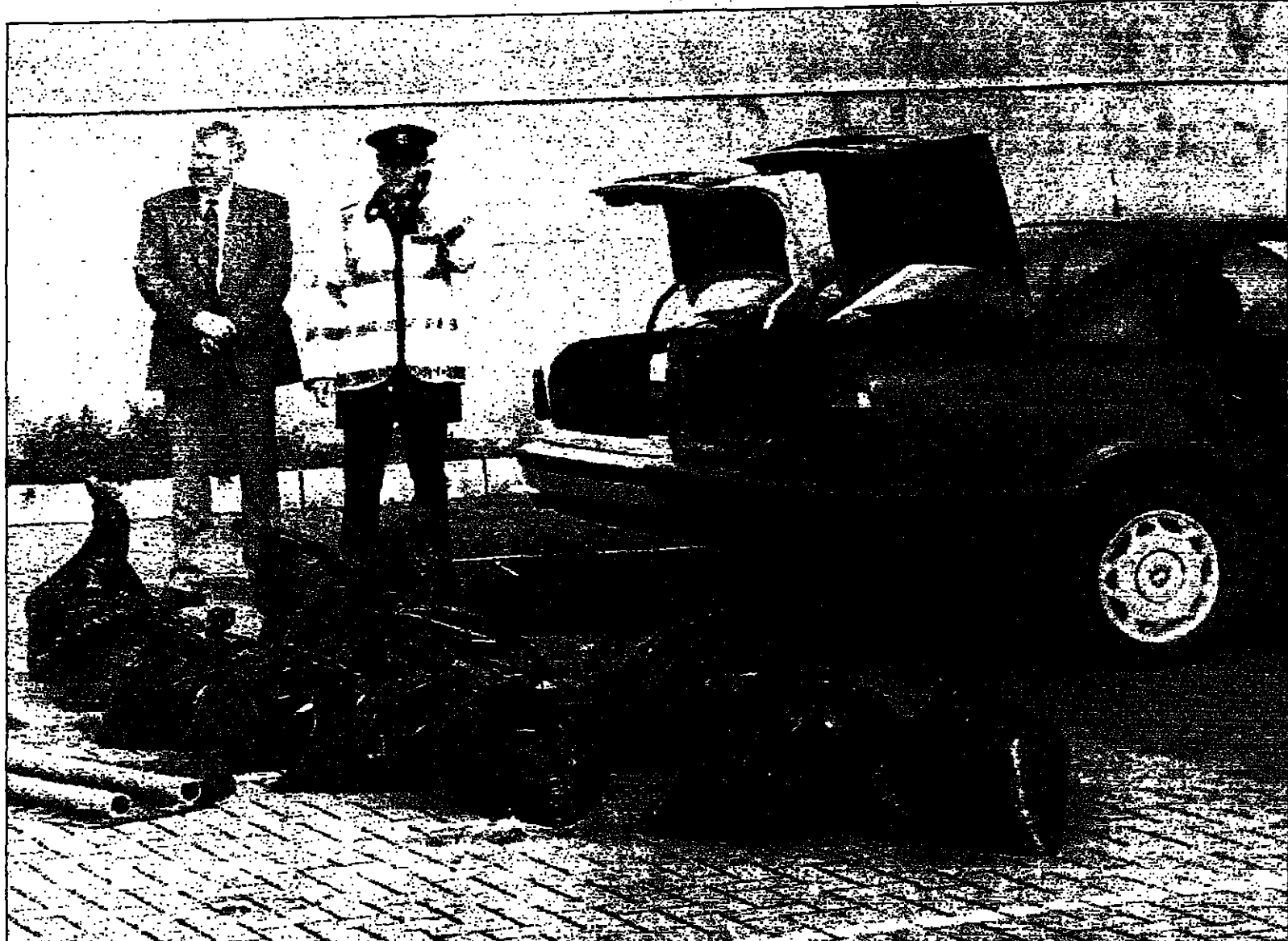
The report said INLA prisoners had been able to hear Wright's name being called in readiness for a visit.

It had then taken INLA prisoners little more than 30 seconds to climb out of their wing, pass through a wire fence which had previously been cut, cross the roof of the wing and drop into the courtyard where Wright was sitting in a van.

The Northern Ireland Secretary, Dr Mo Mowlam, told the Commons: "The report suggests that the shortcomings cannot be attributed to individuals but are instead the result of a slow but long-running deterioration caused by staff fears of the consequences of managing paramilitary prisoners, and by the absence of effective middle management."

Rejecting the idea of introducing a much more restrictive regime for prisoners, she added: "Turning the clock back would be at a price within the prison and in the community that I believe no reasonable person would be prepared to pay."

The Ulster Unionist MP Ken Maginnis, describing Dr Mowlam as "pitiful," denounced the report as "a terrorist's charter for paramilitaries to continue to impose, by violence and the threat of violence, a lawless and undemocratic regime not only inside the prison but outside it, as is admitted in this report."



Bags containing 500lb of explosives found by Irish police who intercepted a car about to board the ferry to Britain at Dun Laoghaire yesterday. Photograph: Helen Reid

Compromise vital for talks to succeed

DESPITE the Government's daily-repeated expressions of optimism on the multi-party talks, the actual position is that the major parties have not yet strayed significantly from their preferred visions of Northern Ireland's future governance.

This means that success in the enterprise is entirely dependent on the emergence, next week, of an 11th flurry of concession, barter and trade-offs in the run-up to next Thursday's talks deadline.

The overall structures expected to form the basis of any new agreement have long been clear: the devil, however, is in the all-important details of how they would function and how they would relate to each other.

The institutional elements are a new devolved assembly in Belfast, a new north-south body

David McKittrick looks at the issues the two sides must address if they are to reach agreement by Thursday's deadline

and a new London-Dublin relationship.

This would be accompanied by the modification of articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution, which claim to the territory of Northern Ireland.

The new wording would take account of the consent principle and would have to be acceptable to Unionists.

Nationalists, meanwhile, have what is termed an equality agenda, aimed at ensuring that Catholics and nationalists will be assured of fair treatment.

The problems of policing and possible prisoner release, which are clearly not capable of solution by next Thursday, will be farmed out to commissions for longer-term consideration.

The Irish government and

John Hume's SDLP want a cabinet-style administration to run a proposed new legislative assembly linked to a strong



John Hume. Agreement must affirm nationalists' Irishness

new north-south institution. While prepared to modify articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution they will be careful to ensure that any new wording affirms the Irishness of nationalists within Northern Ireland.

The Ulster Unionists, meanwhile, favour a weaker assembly without legislative powers and without a cabinet.

Under their scheme, the assembly would function largely through committees, the whole assembly functioning as the decision-making body rather than being run by a cabinet.

They also favour a purely consultative north-south body, which would lack executive powers and would be under the tight control of the assembly.

The Unionist view, which has

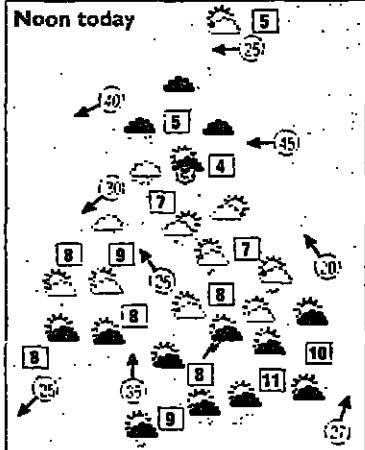
been described as a minimalist approach to a new settlement, is very much at odds with the nationalist aspiration for a far-reaching new dispensation on a par historically with the political settlement of 1920-21.

While all these issues have been thoroughly and even exhaustively rehearsed during months of discussion, the talks are governed by the maxim that "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed."

While this has ensured that there is as yet no agreement, it has also meant that the parties have heard each other's views aired, often at tedious length.

The net result is that the basic structures have become familiar, and so too have the views of all the parties on them. The hope of both governments is that next week the parties will shift to fall-back positions which will be acceptable to each other, and thus successfully close a deal.

WEATHER



Scotland will have biting easterly gales in many parts. The far north will start dry with rain arriving for the afternoon while rain in the south will turn more showery by the afternoon. The rain will fall as snow over the hills with drifting in the gale force winds. Overnight rain in Northern Ireland and northern England will soon clear then all remaining parts of the UK will be showery. The shower: sharp and slow to clear at times, although there will be sunny breaks between the showers.

Outlook for the next few days
Rain across northern Scotland on Saturday and Sunday, although this will peter out at times. Elsewhere will be showery. There will be some sunshine between the showers but they will remain sharp and prolonged at times with a lot of cloud in the north and the best of the sunshine in the south-east of England. Many parts will also be rather windy over the weekend.

British Isles weather
Most recent available figure at noon local time
S: sunny; Cl: clear; E: easterly; F: fog; H: haze; M: mist; R: rain; S: sunny; S: slight; S: showers; S: snow; S: thunder.

Aberdeen	C 6 43	Guernsey	C 11 52
Aldersay	C 12 54	Inverness	C 8 46
Ayr	C 9 48	Isle of Man	C 12 54
Belfast	C 7 45	Isles of Scilly	C 12 54
Birmingham	F 14 57	Jersey	C 12 54
Blackpool	C 9 46	Liverpool	C 9 48
Bournemouth	C 11 52	London	C 14 57
Bristol	R 10 50	Manchester	C 10 50
Brighton	F 14 57	Newcastle	C 5 42
Cardiff	F 12 54	Oxford	C 13 55
Cardle	C 7 45	Plymouth	C 12 54
Dover	C 12 54	Scarborough	C 7 45
Dublin	S 11 52	Southampton	C 12 54
Edinburgh	R 7 45	Southend	F 13 55
Exeter	C 12 54	Stornoway	F 9 48
Glasgow	R 8 46	York	R 6 42

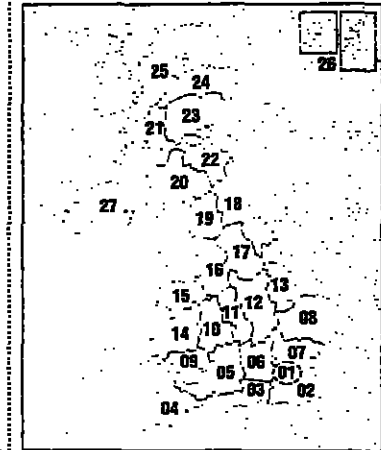
Air quality
Yesterday's readings

	NO ₂	SO ₂
London	Good	Good
S. England	Good	Good
Wales	Good	Good
N. England	Good	Good
Scotland	Good	Good
N. Ireland	Good	Good

Outlook for today

	NO ₂	SO ₂
London	Good	Good
S. England	Good	Good
Wales	Good	Good
N. England	Good	Good
Scotland	Good	Good
N. Ireland	Good	Good

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	AM	HT	PM	HT
London	07 06	6.9	19 33	6.5
Liverpool	04 23	8.5	16 56	8.2
Manchester	12 33	11.2	00 51	10.8
Edinburgh	11 42	7.8	00 18	7.7
Greenwich	05 30	3.3	18 08	3.1
Dun Laoghaire	05 04	3.3	17 47	3.7


Height measured in metres

Lighting-up times

	20.04	10	05.45
Belfast	19 47	10	05 35
Birmingham	19 47	10	05 35
Bristol	19 47	10	05 35
Cardiff	19 47	10	05 35
Edinburgh	19 47	10	05 35
Glasgow	19 47	10	05 35
London	19 47	10	05 35
Manchester	19 47	10	05 35
Newcastle	19 47	10	05 35

Sun & moon

	Sun sets	06.32
London	19 37	19 37
Manchester	19 37	19 37
Edinburgh	19 37	19 37
Glasgow	19 37	19 37
Cardiff	19 37	19 37
Birmingham	19 37	19 37
Bristol	19 37	19 37
Cardiff	19 37	19 37
Birmingham	19 37	19 37
Bristol	19 37	19 37



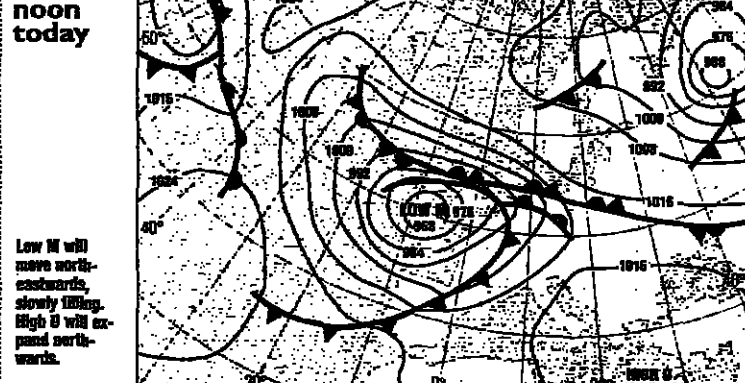
Sun & Moon
First Quarter
April 2004

World weather

Most recent available figure at noon local time

Athens	C 16 51	Buenos Aires	C 20 59	Guatemala	F 28 42	Harbin	C 30 85	Manila	C 30 85
Bahia	C 23 73	Calcutta	C 30 85	Hanoi	F 13 55	Moscow	C 28 87	Nairobi	C 28 87
Bangkok	F 32 72	Colombo	M 7 38	Jakarta	C 32 80	Paris	C 18 64	Sao Paulo	C 12 54
Bombay	C 23 73	Cape Town	F 28 79	Jeddah	C 30 85	Rangoon	F 28 79	Seoul	C 12 54
Buenos Aires	C 20 59	Caracas	C 27 81	Johannesburg	F 15 66	Shanghai	C 4 39	Singapore	C 27 81
Burkina Faso	C 18 64	Casablanca	F 18 64	Jo'burg	F 28 79	Stockholm	C 12 54	Taipei	C 27 81
Calcutta	C 30 85	Chicago	C 7 45	Kuala Lumpur	C 28 80	Tokyo	C 12 54	Tientsin	C 27 81
Cameroon	C 18 64	Christchurch	F 15 66	Kyoto	C 12 54	Ulaanbaatar	C 12 54	Yokohama	C 12 54
Canada	C 18 64	Cairo	C 15 59	Laos	C 12 54	Yokohama	C 12 54		
Cape Town	F 28 79	Cebu	C 15 59	Manila	C 30 85				
Caracas	C 27 81	Colombo	M 7 38	Medan	C 12 54				
Casablanca	F 18 64	Copenhagen	C 15 59	Montevideo	C 12 54				
Cebu	C 15 59	Curacao	C 15 59	Nairobi	C 28 87				
Chicago	C 7 45	Dakar	C 15 59	San Jose	C 12 54				
Christchurch	F 15 66	Dallas	C 14 57	Sao Paulo	C 12 54				
Cairo	C 15 59	Dhaka	C 15 59	Seoul	C 12 54				
Casablanca	F 18 64	Doha	C 15 59	Shanghai	C 4 39				
Cebu	C 15 59	Dublin	C 15 59	Stockholm	C 12 54				
Curacao	C 15 59	Durban	C 15 59	Taipei	C 27 81				
Dakar	C 15 59	Edinburgh	C 15 59	Tientsin	C 27 81				
Dallas	C 14 57	Geneva	C 15 59	Ulaanbaatar	C 12 54				
Dhaka	C 15 59	Hanoi	C 30 85	Yokohama	C 12 54				
Doha	C 15 59	Harbin	C 30 85						
Durban	C 15 59	Hong Kong	C 27 81						
Edinburgh	C 15 59	Kuala Lumpur	C 28 80						
Geneva	C 15 59	Laos	C 12 54						
Hanoi	C 30 85	Manila	C 30 85						
Harbin	C 30 85	Medan	C 12 54						
Hong Kong	C 27 81	Montevideo	C 12 54						
Kuala Lumpur	C 28 80	Nairobi	C 28 87						
Laos	C 12 54	San Jose	C 12 54						
Manila	C 30 85	Seoul	C 12 54						
Medan	C 12 54	Shanghai	C 4 39						
Montevideo	C 12 54	Stockholm	C 12 54						
Nairobi	C 28 87	Taipei	C 27 81						
San Jose	C 12 54	Tientsin	C 27 81						
Seoul	C 12 54	Ulaanbaatar	C 12 54						
Shanghai	C 4 39	Yokohama	C 12 54						
Stockholm	C 12 54								
Taipei	C 27 81								
Tientsin	C 27 81								
Ulaanbaatar	C 12 54								
Yokohama	C 12 54								

Atlantic chart, noon today



MICHAEL HANLON WEATHER WISE

WHEN we talk about "unusual" weather, it is not always clear what we mean. Last summer the temperature reached or exceeded 25C (77F), a rough definition of a "hot day" in Britain, for several days in a row in August in south-east England, and we talked about a "heatwave". But surely a heatwave requires weather truly out of the ordinary. In fact, on average, 25C is exceeded on an average of 11 days every summer in London. So a week or two of continuous fine weather in the South-east is not really a "heatwave" at all.

What about higher temperatures? Most people talk about the magical 90F mark (32C) as the definition of exceptional summer weather. In fact, between 1960 and 1993, 32C was exceeded somewhere in Britain in 14 of the 23 years. So, it is fair to say that in an average summer, somewhere in the country will hit 90F.

A true heatwave, such as the summer of 1911, 1976 or 1990, is marked by long periods of summer heat. In 1911, central London reached or exceeded 27C on 40 days. In 1976, the average daily maximum in central London was 27C for the month of July. In 1990, several days exceeded 30C in southern England and 3 August that year saw the highest temperature ever recorded in the UK, 37.1C (98.8F), at Cheltenham. So far, once, the heatwave headlines were justified.

Cold weather too tends to be over-reported. Snow is not exactly unheard of in southern England, yet its arrival always catches us unawares. Between 1960 and 1993, only 10 years saw not a single day's snow cover at Kew, west London (one of Britain's least snowy spots). Nine of those years saw 10 days or more of snow cover, so snow, even in London, is not newsworthy.

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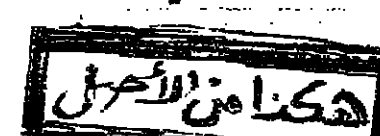
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Warnings could help cut heart deaths

By Jeremy Laurence
Health Editor

SURVIVAL FROM heart attacks could be trebled, if people were told in clearer terms how to deal with them, medical researchers say. The myth that heart attacks are always dramatic events in which the victim goes "aahh" and dies needs to be dispelled so that sufferers can identify the symptoms indicating the start of an attack and seek help quickly.

A study of 3,500 men and women who had heart attacks in Brighton, Sussex, South Glamorgan, and York in 1994 and 1995 found that three-quarters of the 1,500 who died did so before reaching hospital. Among those under 55, 27 per cent died but once patients reached hospital this fell to 3 per cent, a ninefold reduction.

About 333,000 people have a heart attack in the UK each year. Dr Robin Norris, consultant cardiologist at the Royal Sussex County hospital, Brighton, says in the *British Medical Journal* that hospital treatment for heart disease has improved greatly in the last 20 years but death rates outside hospital remain high.

Overall survival might be trebled if patients and bystanders knew what to do during an attack, and if ambulances responded more quickly.

In many cases heart attacks begin slowly with a pain not unlike indigestion spreading to the arms and neck and accompanied by sweating, nausea, and breathlessness. However, patients confuse these symptoms with those of over-indulgence, viral infection or general fatigue. In a separate study in the

BMI, Professor Michael Calnan and colleagues of the Centre for Health Services Studies, University of Kent, investigated 43 patients who had heart attacks, half of whom delayed more than four hours before seeking medical help. Most of those who delayed did so because they did not realise they were having a heart attack.

One man complained of feeling unwell to his wife and mother-in-law and they all decided it was indigestion. He took a tablet but the discomfort did not wear off so he had a glass of lemonade and when there was still no improvement he sucked a mint.

Professor Calnan said: "Those that went to hospital promptly had similar symptoms to those who delayed seeking help but they had a broader understanding of what a heart attack involved. The delays felt it wasn't what a heart attack should be like."

There was a risk that people might call ambulances out unnecessarily if they confused ordinary episodes of indigestion with heart attacks but Professor Calnan said this had to be balanced against the likely saving of life. "One sufferer told us he was very concerned about wasting NHS resources. It is very difficult for patients."

A third study in the *BMI* shows that for women, smoking raises the risk of a heart attack by 50 per cent more than it does for men. Danish researchers who studied 24,000 people over 12 years say this could be because women are more sensitive to the harmful effects of smoking, as a result of the interaction between components of tobacco smoke and hormonal factors.



Whoops! Mr Soames is a sitting duck for jokes about his appetite

Photograph: PA

Happy eater with little appetite for humility or political correctness

IN THE NEWS

NICHOLAS SOAMES

AT THE END of delivering a series of rather bizarre ramblings in the Commons chamber on Wednesday afternoon, Nicholas Soames apologised for being a bore. But it was not him who was boring, but the debate, writes Clare Garner.

Maybe the overgrown schoolboy was just being mischievous. "Don't worry, I'll be just as indiscreet without the booze," he assured a journalist recently. Or maybe, as Richard Caborn, the Minister for the Regions, suggested, the former Food Minister was "a little emotional, if not a little tired" after a very good lunch.

The rotund Mr Soames, affectionately known as Bunter, Nickers, Fatty, Creepy Crawley and Crawley Food Mountain (after his former constituency, Crawley in Sussex), denied being drunk. He had pitched up at the Money Resolution in the Regional Development Agencies Bill after a "very small, abstemious lunch in the tea-room of the House", he insisted, adding: "My lunches consist of bananas, still water, preserved apricots and bats' droppings."

His performance was vintage stuff. "I remember a morning not long ago: a cold, damp, spring morning, after the House had been sitting all night. Regrettably, Madam Speaker, you were not in the Chair," he roused, before lamenting the absence of Dawn Primarolo. "It is a matter of regret to me that the Financial Secretary - a woman who, for whatever reason, commands the universal admiration of Conservative Members - is not in her place."

Betty Boothroyd gently guided him back to the "very limited" motion. "He is romanticising and taking me along with him, but I must attend to the business of the House," she said. Her mild ticking off, which

was tempered by her closing remarks: "The Hon Gentleman is never a bore: he always has something interesting to say" was something of a replay. Only last November, she had to reprimand him for "crossing the floor" to chat to a female MoD official during Question Time. "Mr Soames! They may be pretty girls, but we don't do those things," she exclaimed.

To Mr Soames, the grandson of Winston Churchill, every day is "one big adventure". He believes in being himself - and if people don't like it they can "stuff it".

Mr Soames, 50, is a fierce defender of country sports. He even referred to his newborn daughter, Isabella, as being the size of a decent salmon. He was "bone idle" at Eton, collecting seven 'O' Levels before entering the 11th Hussars. He considers Prince Charles his best friend and was his equerry from 1970 to 1972. Charles was best man at his wedding to the heiress Catherine Weatherall in 1981.

It is just as well Mr Soames has no truck with political correctness, because he is himself a sitting duck for fatist jokes. An anonymous woman said that making love to him was "like having a wardrobe fall on top of you with the key sticking out"; and an MP interrupted his tirade on the Millennium Dome to suggest: "You could have an exhibition inside your own underpants." Whatever else is levelled at him, one thing is sure: this man is anything but a bore.

APPETITE

"I'm a PG Wodehouse fan and I've always concentrated on Jeeves' miracle cure for hangovers, which is a raw egg, Tabasco, Worcestershire sauce and a glass of sherry, all in one go."

GULF WAR SYNDROME

Mr Soames commissioned the inquiry after he apologised to the Commons for misleading MPs on the widespread use of organophosphates in the Gulf war. Campaigners claim pesticides could have made more than 1,000 veterans ill. He has refused to resign.

THE BLACK DOG

"I do get melancholy now and again, but you go to bed, sleep well and wake up pawing the ground like a horse in the morning. My grandfather had this appalling thing, what they called the black dog in his life, but I don't suffer from that."

PRINCE CHARLES

"I admire his compassion, his humanity, his understanding, his humour. He's a painter, a gardener, an author. He's an incredibly hard worker, he won't just strike a pose or do something for the sake of short-term public approbation."

Rally driver gets 12 years jail for road-rage killing

By Jason Bennetto
Crime Correspondent

AN unemployed rally driver was jailed for 12 years yesterday for killing a young couple by pushing their car across a dual carriageway during a road-rage attack.

Jason Humble, 33, from Farnborough, Hampshire, was convicted by an Old Bailey jury of the manslaughter of Toby Edey, 22, and his 20-year-old girlfriend, Karen Martin.

It was revealed that Humble, who boasted he was "the best driver ever", had previously been convicted of a road-rage offence 13 years ago.

The Recorder of London, Sir Lawrence Verney, said: "You used your car in a most aggressive way in order to push out of your path another vehicle. As a result two people lost their young lives."

Humble used his high-performance white Senator car to shunt Mr Edey's Fiesta three times from behind in an attempt

to get by on the fast lane of the A316 dual carriageway in west London, last October. The Fiesta careered across the wooden central reservation into the path of a car.

Humble tried to cover up the crime and later claimed he had not learnt of the couple's death for several days and by then was too afraid to tell police what he had done.

He told the court that he had never touched the Fiesta with his car, but agreed that he felt hostile, and had wanted to get

by it. He denied the manslaughter charge.

Sir Lawrence said the offence was aggravated because Humble had immediately driven off and did his best to conceal the car and his role in their deaths.

Humble showed no emotion as he was led to cells, after being convicted by the jury on a 10-2 majority verdict. He will not be considered for parole until he has served at least half of the 12-year term. He was also disqualified from driving for 10 years.

The 12-year sentence was welcomed by the families of his victims. The Edey family's solicitor, Ashley Lancome Shaw, said: "This was an exceptionally serious case. The reckless madness of Jason Humble has resulted in the deaths of two innocent young lives. The Edey family and the Martin family have been devastated by the loss of Toby and Karen."

The chances of being killed in a road-rage attack are one in 9.5 million compared to the one in 15,500 chance of dying in a road traffic accident, according to the Automobile Association's drivers' behaviour unit.



Karen Martin and boyfriend Toby Edey (centre), whose car was shunted by Jason Humble

Leukaemia boy's family ordered out of UK

By Jeremy Laurence

THE FAMILY of Fahim Manji, who are trying to raise £100,000 to pay for his leukaemia treatment, was ordered to leave the country by the Home Office.

Twelve-year-old Fahim, who was featured in yesterday's *Independent*, is being treated at the Royal Free Hospital, London, after suffering a relapse. He has had two courses of chemotherapy since arriving in the country from Tanzania last June but now needs a bone marrow transplant.

He is not eligible for NHS treatment and his parents, Amin and Nasha, have raised £35,000 through appeals in the *Independent* and *Harrow Observer*, together with £10,000 the family brought with them, to pay for it. The Home Office has ruled that Fahim can stay with his aunt, who lives in Hillingdon, London but the rest of the family must return to Tanzania.

The family were admitted as medical visitors last June on the understanding that they could support themselves. When they applied for an extension last

December, Mr and Mrs Manji sought permission to work because funds were running out. This appears to have triggered the order for them to leave. The Home Office said it would consider an appeal for one of them to stay provided they could prove they had sufficient funds.

Mr Manji said: "We were told Fahim's treatment could last two years and we can't go on depending on relatives. We have a 12-year-old boy with leukaemia soon to have a transplant. If I go back to Tanzania I am not going to get any sleep. It is terrible."

Parrinder Bhogal, the family's solicitor, described the decision as "harsh".

"The Home Office can make an exception to the immigration rules but they have decided this is not an exceptional case. They would have allowed the family to stay if they could have supported themselves but they won't let them work so that they can do so. They are in a Catch 22."

Donations for Fahim's medical treatment may be sent to the Fahim Manji Appeal, 326 Station Road, Harrow, Middlesex, HA1 2DR.

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Youth policy:
The actor Peter
O'Toole giving
some cricket
lessons at
Ampleforth
public school in
North Yorkshire

Photograph:
Rob Bodman



Holocaust debt families get British apology

By Louise Jury

THE GOVERNMENT yesterday apologised to Holocaust survivors and their families whose money and valuables were wrongly kept by British banks at the end of the Second World War.

And, to the delight of Jewish organisations, it announced that an initial £2m would be made available to reimburse those with outstanding claims to settle.

Publishing a long-awaited report on the consequences of Britain's wartime Trading With The Enemy legislation, Margaret Beckett, the President of the Board of Trade, said the Government was "revolted by

Nazi persecution and has the greatest sympathy for its victims and their relatives".

Provisions for the relief of victims of the Nazis at the end of the war had been "well-intentioned" but sometimes "insensitive to their plight", she said.

"The present Government deeply regrets this, and I would like to apologise to those individuals and to their relatives and descendants. A different attitude would be expected now."

The Government came under fire last year for the way post-war bureaucracy prevented many Jewish families from reclaiming valuables placed in Britain for safe-keeping. "Enemy assets" frozen during the war included accounts held by German and eastern European Jews.

In one case, the family of a woman who killed herself rather than be taken by the Gestapo to a death camp was denied a claim, because she was not actually "detained" as laid down in the rules.

Others claimants were refused if they had been detained in a labour camp rather than a death camp.

The 144-page report, published today, showed most assets seized under the war-time legislation were returned to the original owners or - to the anger of Jewish organisations -

were used to compensate British nationals whose assets were seized in German-controlled territories.

Treaty signatories undertook to compensate their own nationals whose property was confiscated in the UK, but Jews in Communist-controlled eastern Europe received nothing from their governments.

Mrs Beckett said the Government accepted the general principle that confiscated assets placed in the UK by victims of the Nazis should be returned to them "where practicable and where claims can be validated". But she said: "The inadequacy of many of the records will make this no easy task."

To assist, the Government is to ask an independent assessor to study the report and consult interested parties about it.

Lord Janner, chairman of the Holocaust Educational Trust, was delighted by the move. "Having harried the Government, I would like to say this action is a shining example of honour and decency," he said, contrasting it with the "disgraceful" behaviour of the post-war governments.

Eldred Tabachnik, of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, said they broadly welcomed the report. "There is clearly a need for a practical and workable scheme to be put in place as soon as is possible."

Cut-price cigarette imports outlawed by European court

A DEAL by which British smokers could buy imported cigarettes at discounts of up to 40 per cent was outlawed by the European Court of Justice yesterday.

The British Enlightened Tobacco Company, which first hit the headlines when it introduced a brand called "Death", bought cigarettes in EU countries where taxes are low and resold them directly to individuals in Britain. BJ-Cunningham chairman of the ETC said yesterday the company would have to go into liquidation because the court case had cost £750,000.

Smoker Peter Boddington yesterday lost the final stage of his two-year battle to light up during his daily commute from Brighton to London after his case was rejected in the Lords.

Bouncer in perjury remand

A NIGHTCLUB bouncer charged with inciting a woman to commit perjury was remanded to the Mid-Wales Psychiatric Hospital yesterday by Brecon magistrates. Andrew Griffiths, 32, of Brecon, was said to have pressurised Ceris Lloyd, 16, who saw an explosion at a house in the town which killed two men. She had left seconds before the blast and Mr Griffiths wanted her to lie about explosives she saw there.

An inquest into the deaths of Paul Horner, 32, and Andrew Cridland, 31, has been deferred several times. — Tony Heath

Hanged boy: pupils quizzed

MORE THAN 120 children in the same school year as a boy found hanged after leaving a note claiming that he was bullied, are to be questioned by detectives. Staffordshire Police said yesterday that six detectives would be questioning all 124 pupils in Darren Steele's year at de Ferrers High School in Burton-upon-Trent, over the next few days.

Fifteen-year-old Darren was found dead in his bedroom at his home in the town last weekend, sparking accusations yesterday from his mother, Jane Ealcs, 37, that his tormentors were guilty of "murder".

Arrest man is not Mardi Gras

A pensioner being questioned by police over firearms offences has been ruled out as having any connection with the so-called Mardi Gras bomb attacks. The man, who is in his late 60s, was arrested last night near a Sainsbury supermarket in South Ruislip, west London, on Wednesday.

He is not thought to have any connection with a bombing campaign against the supermarket chain. However, detectives are still questioning the man over an alleged firearms offence.

Vitamin suppliers accused

PLANS to restrict the sale of high-dosage vitamin B6 were put out to consultation by the Government yesterday. The food safety minister, Jeff Rooker, accused the manufacturers of resisting the proposals because they did not want to fund the research necessary to get B6 licensed as a medicine. The move followed evidence last year that high doses over a long period could be harmful.

— Jeremy Lawrence, Health Editor

Hargreaves quits editor's seat

IAN HARGREAVES is stepping down as editor of the *New Statesman* to become Professor of Journalism at Cardiff University. He will retain a connection with the political weekly as its chairman and help pick his successor. A former editor of *The Independent*, Mr Hargreaves, 47, is also set to become a presenter of Radio 4's *Analysis*. — Rob Brown, Media Editor

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Debate debased by dope

CIVILISED men and women may wish to think twice before accepting any invitation from the National Union of Students in future.

On Wednesday evening, at the NUS's annual convention in Blackpool's Winter Gardens, a debate on the legalisation of cannabis was held in which two of the featured participants were Howard Marks, the patron saint of dope, and Peter Hitchens, outspoken conservative *Express* columnist. The evening ended in a riot, with a Blackpool police in body armour called to quell an outraged crowd that was literally baying for Mr Hitchens' blood.

According to Stuart Jackson, a student journalist at the event, many in the crowd had been drinking heavily and the core protesters were members of an activist lesbian-gay-bisexual group. Mr Hitchens' opening statement went: "According to your categories, I am a reactionary sexist homophobic and an ex-frotskyist ... what is even worse, I am proud of it." He was booed by some, then interrupted by three women shouting "Fascist" who had to be removed by security guards.

By all accounts, the debate then settled down into a very lively, entertaining and provocative encounter. "One of the best debates I've heard on cannabis legalisation," Mr Hitchens said later. Unfortunately, before its conclusion one Douglas Trainer, president of the NUS, arrived on stage and ordered Hitchens to leave the platform for being in violation of NUS statutes against sexism and homophobia. "If he's going, I'm going too," declared a truly libertarian Mr Marks, who put his arm around Mr Hitchens and helped him through a throng of emboldened protesters. Punches and rubbish were thrown but, happily, Mr Hitchens was unhurt. In fact, the next day he told Pandora that he was far more shocked by the curtailment of his freedom of speech than he was worried about the angry mob. "I've been in very frightening situations in my career, but I just did not feel it there," he said.

According to other witnesses, however, it was a nasty scene outside the room where he was hiding with Mr Marks and others. Finally, once the police had convinced Mr Hitchens to leave, Mr Trainer addressed the crowd and apologised profusely for ever having invited Mr Hitchens to speak.

Such good manners! Pandora would like to salute Mr Trainer, obviously a bright new star in the firmament of political correctness. Doug, at the end of the 20th century, it's not easy to set new standards in fascism but you've done far more than just that. You've turned Peter Hitchens into a victim.

Cool Cookie



PANDORA was intrigued by Robin Cook's statement earlier this week at the launch of Panel 2000 to hype up Britain's overseas image. "The picture many have of us is out of date," Mr Cook said. "Some see us as we were 20 years ago, stuck in decline."

There's nothing wrong in identifying with your nation, but what happens when your nation is asked to identify with you? This is a question each of us may well ask as we look at this old photograph of Mr Cook. Pandora's believes that Robin's current image is definitely much cooler than it was in 1974.

Pandora



The terrible lie: Myles Evans comforts Zoe's mother, Paula Hamilton, at a news conference after her disappearance and, right, Zoe Photograph: PA

Lying stepfather sentenced to life for Zoe's murder

By Kate Watson-Smyth

THE stepfather of Zoe Evans, who made an emotional television appeal for her safe return, was yesterday sentenced to life for her murder.

Myles Evans, 24, showed little emotion as the jury at Bristol Crown Court delivered a majority verdict after more than 16 hours of deliberation.

Choking back tears, Evans appeared at a press conference following Zoe's disappearance in January last year, and promised that the nine-year-old would not be in trouble if she came home. She would be given "lots of cuddles and hugs" and there would be a puppy waiting for her as an early birthday present.

Zoe disappeared from her home in Army married quarters in Warmminster, Wiltshire, on 11 January last year, sparking the country's biggest-ever search for a missing child.

Her body was found six weeks later, concealed deep in the undergrowth on Battlesbury Hill, less than a mile from her home. The search cost £1m and involved a total of 150 po-

lice, 250 military personnel and scores of members of the public.

Passing sentence, Mr Justice Eady said: "We shall probably never know exactly what happened that night. It is clear from what remained of her body that Zoe was brutalised before her death and must have undergone a terrible ordeal during the last minutes."

As Evans, a private in the Royal Logistics Corps, was led from the courtroom, Zoe's mother, Paula Hamilton, 29, and her grandmother, Ann Hamilton, could be heard weeping from the public gallery.

After the hearing Ms Hamilton said she had no doubt that he would be convicted.

"Only he knows the suffering he has caused and may it remain with him and burden him for the rest of his life," she said in a statement.

Alun Jenkins QC, for the defence, said there would be an appeal.

The court heard that Evans took Zoe from the family home at night and attacked and murdered her outside, possibly after trying to abuse her sexually.

He then buried her naked body in an animal hole.

Nigel Pascoe QC, prosecuting, said she died from asphyxiation because her top, a T-shirt with the logo No Fear, was pushed into her mouth as a gag and she inhaled blood from her nose, which had been broken by a blow from Evans's fist.

On the morning of her disappearance, Evans reported for duty as usual at the mechanical transport section at Warminster Barracks.

Laughing and joking, he played computer games with a woman lance corporal, but although considered an able player he lost every game that morning.

When his wife phoned later to say that Zoe was missing, Evans was the dutiful, concerned parent, joining searches for the youngster. That night he went to bed early, saying he wanted to be up early the next day to take part in the renewed search. Two days later, police found Evans's T-shirt in a copse near the rear door of his home and a pair of Zoe's knickers in a nearby field. Both were stained with her blood.

Evans and Ms Hamilton were arrested, but after three days of questioning they were released without charge. Ms Hamilton, who had married Evans only five months before, began to suspect her husband

Dieters urged to stock up on starch

DIETERS have been getting it wrong. Carbohydrates such as potatoes and bread really are good for the waistline after all, writes Janet Coull.

The World Health Organisation and the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation say we should be increasing our intake of starchy foods to give us a nutritious energy boost.

But an NOP survey released last week shows that people keen to keep trim are shunning starchy foodstuffs because they think it will make them fat.

Nearly 60 per cent of women wrongly believe eating carbohydrates will make them put on weight, and many people are unable to identify which types of food actually contain carbohydrates. In fact, government health advice is for people to increase their intake of bread, pulses and cereals so that 50 per cent of all energy is obtained from carbohydrates.

Trish Tweed, of the Health Education Authority, said: "It's a popular misconception that carbohydrates are bad for you, and people tend to think that starchy food is fattening. But it actually contains less fat than people think."

"At least half the main part of a meal should be starchy, so we are advising people to get their energy from carbohydrates rather than fat."

Government public health targets are aiming to cut the proportion of energy obtained by eating fatty foods from its present level of 40 per cent by encouraging people to eat more starch-based food.

Professor Peter Aggett, head of the Lancashire Post-Graduate School of Medicine and Health, said public opinion has been affected by years of misinformation. "The problem is the fault of advice generated 30 years ago when the common belief was that bread and potatoes are bad for you. We now know that, ideally, we would like people to get most of their energy from carbohydrates, so we need to reduce the proportion we receive from fat."

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Call cost 50p per minute at all times. Winners picked at random after lines close 6 April 1998. Usual Independent Newspaper rules apply. Editor's decision is final

Dean attacked for Abbey sackings

By Rosa Prince

THE controversial Dean of Westminster Abbey has become embroiled in a new row over the sacking of 12 long-serving elderly volunteer tour guides.

Earlier this week, the Rt Rev Wesley Carr was branded a bully by Frank Field, the social security minister, for suspending the Abbey's popular organist, Martin Neary.

Now he faces more dissent after reportedly reducing several elderly women to tears at a meeting in which he informed the Abbey's 40 guides that they would have to retire once they reached 75.

Dr Carr told the guides: "People need to know they don't have to go on forever and people need to feel they are not joining a group that is necessarily elderly."

"Everyone who loves the place is actually loved by the place itself, but there comes a point, and it happens to all of us, that we must face retirement. But we are not abruptly curtailing. People will be kept in touch with a visit each year and a newsletter."

Although many of the guides have served at the Abbey for a number of years, acquiring detailed knowledge of the church, they have been told they must leave for insurance purposes.

One elderly guide now facing the sack described the Dean



Sombre duty: The Queen shakes hands with the Dean of Westminster after the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales. Photograph: Thierry Orban/Austral International

as a bully who had handled the process brutally and insensitively.

She added that working at the Abbey meant a lot to the guides, many of whom were as agile as 60-year-olds.

Emma St John Smith, spokesperson for the Abbey, said: "The Dean was concerned

at the large number of elderly people and there was a feeling that it would be reasonable to have a cut-off retirement age."

"He felt that 75 was not unreasonable. I was not at the meeting myself, but I think the accounts of it have been over-dramatised."

Despite winning praise for

his organisation of the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales, Dr Carr has been a controversial figure since his arrival at the Abbey 10 months ago.

Staff were upset at the introduction of charges for tourists and by his decision to allow the body of the right-wing former politician, Enoch Pow-

ell, to lie in state in the chapel before his funeral.

This week he was accused of running a "totalitarian regime" by Mr Field, a leading Anglican, after the suspension of Mr Neary amid allegations of irregularities in the administration of the music department.

Visits to the Abbey have fall-

en by 20 per cent since the introduction of a £5 charge. Dr Carr said that he brought it in because: "Too many visitors treated the Abbey like a waiting room or somewhere to meet their friends."

He has said he would like the Abbey to regain a more spiritual atmosphere.

Royal Mail to deliver e-mail via the postman

By Charles Arthur
Science Editor

WANT to send a letter? Now you can - by e-mail. And instead of costing 29 pence, like a normal first-class letter, it will cost £1.50.

At first glance, the attractions of the scheme unveiled jointly yesterday by the Royal Mail and Microsoft are not obvious. The service allows you to send an e-mail to the Royal Mail, which will print it out in its main sorting office in Mount Pleasant, north London, and deliver it to a physical, rather than electronic, address. The cost: £1.50 for a one-sheet message, £3 for four sheets, but only £10 for a 50-page black-and-white document - the scheme does not yet have colour printers.

Of course, for the terminally lazy, or the lazy at their terminals, it will be ideal: no more addressing envelopes, or wet those vile-lasting stamps. However, the two organisations think that the benefits of RelayOne, as the service is called, will be clearer for international communications - especially for linking people who do have computers up with those who do not.

The Royal Mail said it would also compete with overnight de-

livery services outside the UK to addresses here by guaranteeing next-day delivery at a cheaper price.

Also, sending the e-mail to the UK to send it to the Continent might be faster than air mail from the United States - though delivery times aren't guaranteed once the letter gets into the international postal system.

After registering at the Web site, www.RelayOne.msn.com, the user e-mails their message, with the delivery address, to the Royal Mail. That will then be sent by the normal postal service to the required address, anywhere in the world, while the charge is levied to the user's credit card.

Anybody using the service won't have to worry about noisy postmen reading their e-mail. All the work, from downloading the words to stuffing the envelopes, will be done by machines.

Richard Dyke, managing director of the Royal Mail, said the service is "the human face of technology, combining the best of computer wizardry with the traditional tried and trusted method of hand delivery by the postman."

The Royal Mail also said it had no immediate estimates about the volume of mail that will be handled.

Pesticides caused BSE, says farmer

A FARMER who believes BSE in cattle and "new variant" Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease in humans were due to powerful chemicals used in pesticides rather than infected cattle feed, tried to warn the Government about his theory, writes Charles Arthur, Science Editor.

Mark Purdey, a dairy farmer from Taunton, Somerset, told the BSE inquiry yesterday that he had argued since the early 1980s that organophosphates (OPs), used in a range of treat-

ments from sheep dips to human shampoos against head lice, could cause nerve damage.

Mr Purdey, 44, said at the hearing in south London that he did not believe the widely accepted theory that BSE was caused by cattle feed infected with the BSE-like sheep disease scrapie.

"When BSE first came on the scene I was very sceptical about the various theories put forward for it, such as scrapie infected meat and bone meal fed to cattle," he said.

"British meat and bone meal were sold all over the world, including the Middle East, where there has not been a single case."

"I started looking at chemicals as the cause for the disease, because I had a hunch, I suppose. I then heard that people who work with pets or farm animals were most susceptible to new variant CJD and they are also most exposed to OPs, as it is used on cats and farm animals."

In 1985 Mr Purdey won a legal battle with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (MAFF), so he did not have to treat his cattle with OPs.

Despite this he had two cases of BSE on his farm - though in animals he had bought from farms using OPs. "I felt there was a kind of alliance between the Government and the chemical companies which produced OP pesticides," he said.

Although he repeated his theory many times, MAFF officials either said that it had been researched and rejected or that it had no merit.

DAILY POEM

Pelicans

By Beverley Braune

Pelicans with clipped wings fan the sand that bars an entrance to the bay, their deep bills tasting flight upon crumbs that graze the air.

A ferris-wheel dips with children circling, counter to pelican time. A pedal boat froths new furlongs through the water's finest silk.

The flock sits waiting for a shallow-breasted wave to crest.

This poem comes from Beverley Braune's second collection, *Camouflage* (Bloodaxe, £6.95). Born in Kingston, Jamaica, where she published her first book *Dream Diary*, Beverley Braune now lives in Sydney, Australia.

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هنا من المرحل

Sixth formers face league tables in 3Rs

A NEW league table to measure standards in the three Rs in sixth forms was proposed yesterday by a senior government adviser. Tony Higgins, chief executive of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, proposed the league to measure teenagers' performance in literacy, maths and computer skills, alongside the conventional A-level table.

He was speaking at a student choices conference, organised by *The Independent*, as ministers prepare to unveil far reaching reforms of A-levels.

The Government is expected to keep the current A-level system, but insists that all sixth formers study so-called key skills. Employers increasingly demand that school leavers and graduates have well developed communications and computer skills when they start work.

Mr Higgins proposed the new league as part of a package of changes to the A-level tables, which are based on giving students points for each exam grade.

He said the current league was "nonsense". He said: "The points system is being used for purposes for which it was never designed. It's my view that all tables which are based on A-level points are totally, utterly completely and fatally flawed."

A Ucas report sent to ministers yesterday recommends replacing the system, which gives 10 points for an A and two points for an E, with an all embracing scheme bringing in work-based and academic qualifications.

The work, commissioned by the Government, has important implications for the crucial

Adviser proposes to measure performance in literacy, maths and computer skills, writes Ben Russell

GCSE league table, which will be based on A-level style points from November.

Mr Higgins said: "There could also now be two league tables for schools and colleges; one having a schools performance in the mainstream qualifications like A-levels, GNVQs or Scottish higher, and a second showing its performance in inculcating key skills into its pupils. Schools could find themselves in a very different position on each of the two league tables."

Ministers are expected to put basic skills at the heart of sixth form education. But they are expected to turn down demands to broaden A-levels by introducing a European style baccalaureate, with pupils studying five or more subjects. The Prime Minister in particular is understood to have feared accusations of watering down the "gold standard" of A-level.

Even the idea of an optional diploma covering A-levels and vocational studies is thought to have been shelved.

At present, a small proportion of marks at A-level is allocated for grammar and spelling. Key skills will be marked sep-

arately and shown on the certificate, although students taking some subjects such as maths and English will not have to take separate tests.

Speaking at the conference, education minister Baroness Blackstone called for sixth-formers to have better careers information. She said: "We expect students to become more demanding consumers, and it's absolutely right that they should be."

Diana Warwick, chief executive of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, said: "Meeting the Government's targets for expansion will depend on students getting value and a return on their investment in terms of their time and money."



Fashion animals: Anna Sui's Fall 98 collection in New York proved to be an occasion for the wild at heart - a frog headpiece tops off a brown jacket with fur fringe, left, while a faux sealskin parka promises to keep the cold at bay, right
Photograph: Kathy Willens/AP

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Wren warned about affair

By Kate Watson-Smyth

THE WREN at the centre of a sex scandal which threatens the career of a senior officer was warned about the relationship by the Second Sea Lord, a court martial was told yesterday.

Lieutenant Commander Karen Pearce told hearing at Aldershot, Hampshire, that she went into the office of Admiral Sir Jock Slater who said: "You are an attractive female, be careful."

But she said that he was not aware of the full extent of her relationship with army Lieutenant Colonel Keith Pople and that they had not publicised it.

Lt-Cdr Pearce, 34, is a key prosecution witness against Lt-Col Pople who is accused of having an affair with her while he was her superior in the office of the then Second Sea Lord. He is also accused of sending threatening phone calls and letters to her, her friends and senior officers to try to wreck her career.

Lt-Col Pople was removed from the command of 4 Regiment Army Air Corp after the investigation was started.

The court martial was told that the couple exchanged

daily gorillas as love tokens. They sent each other letters referring to the toys as a running joke during their three-year affair, which started while they both worked in Whitehall on a key Ministry of Defence team.

During cross-examination of Lt-Cdr Pearce, Rhydian Willis, counsel for the defence, said that the couple continued to send friendly letters to each other despite the break-up of their affair in June, 1996. Soon afterwards, Lt-Cdr Pearce had started an affair with Lieutenant Nigel McTear who moved in with her at the start of October. But she continued to exchange letters with Lt-Col Pople which she did not show to her new lover. In one letter, Lt-Col Pople asked for the return or destruction of his letters. Lt-Cdr Pearce said she did not want to return them because they were sent to her during a special time of her life.

Lt-Col Pople denies two charges of scandalous conduct unbecoming the character of an officer and conduct to the prejudice of good order and military discipline. If found guilty, he will be dismissed from the Army after a 20-year career.

The hearing continues.

National traits take a television holiday

CHANNEL 4 secretly filmed 120 tourists from four countries for a "mammoth psychological experiment" into national stereotypes, writes Paul McCann. *The Tourist Trap*, which airs next month, used hidden microphones and cameras to film tourists from Britain, Germany, Japan and the US on a free holiday in Turkey they were told might make a television show.

Undercover actors tried to provoke their compatriots into showing national differences by stealing, confessing a likely adultery, queue-jumping and taking a naked shower. The organisers also tried to provoke reactions in the tourists by lacing their wine with vinegar to see who would send it back, organising a toga party and a sandcastle-build-

ing competition. The Britons were least worried about the actor stealing drinks while a barman's back was turned and joined in drinking them.

The Japanese ostracised their supposed thief and came close to informing on him to the hotel.

In some ways the tourists, matched to be the same age, class background and occupations, lived up to national stereotypes. But the film-makers also found some surprises: the normally restrained Japanese were as boisterous as the British, and the Americans spent much time trying to break the hotel's no-smoking rules. The tourists were told on the last day they had been secretly filmed and gave permission to have the results broadcast.

OPEN ALL EASTER WEEKEND.

Lawrence police chief suspected black teenager

By Kathy Marks

THE SENIOR police officer in charge at the scene of Stephen Lawrence's murder said yesterday that he initially believed that the victim's friend, another black teenager, might be responsible for his injuries.

Inspector Steven Groves told the public inquiry into Stephen's death that although he saw various people at the scene when he arrived, including police officers and a "civilian" couple, Duwayne Brooks was the only person he regarded as a possible suspect.

Duwayne, a close friend of Stephen's, who was waiting for a bus with him when he was stabbed by a white gang in Eltham, south-east London, in 1993, was "hysterical" and had to be restrained, Insp Groves said.

Ian McDonald QC, counsel for Duwayne, said: "So you arrive at a scene of a crime. There is one black man lying on the floor and one other black man standing close by. Everyone else is white. Of all the people there, he is the one person who you think might be a suspect!"

Insp Groves replied: "That is something that went through my mind, certainly. Duwayne Brooks was there. He might have been a suspect." He denied that this amounted to "racial stereotyping".

Mr McDonald said: "There was absolutely nothing in that situation to suggest that he was behaving like the attacker in some post-pub fight. There was nothing to suggest that he was a suspect, except that he was a young black man, the only young black man still on his feet when you got there."

Insp Groves agreed that he did not find out the nature of Stephen's injuries or his condition. Nor did he cordon off the scene early, order a house to house search or follow up a lead about white youths seen behaving suspiciously in a car, he admitted.

He told the inquiry, which is chaired by Sir William Macpherson of Cluny, that he could not elicit any information from Duwayne.

He said he went off to a nearby pub, the Welcome Inn, unaware that Duwayne had already given Stephen's name and address and his own details

to another officer, Constable Linda Bethel, as well as telling her in which direction the youths had run off.

"You can learn more from people drinking in a pub than from knocking on doors at 11 o'clock at night," he said. "I thought this was the place to get quality information from quickly."

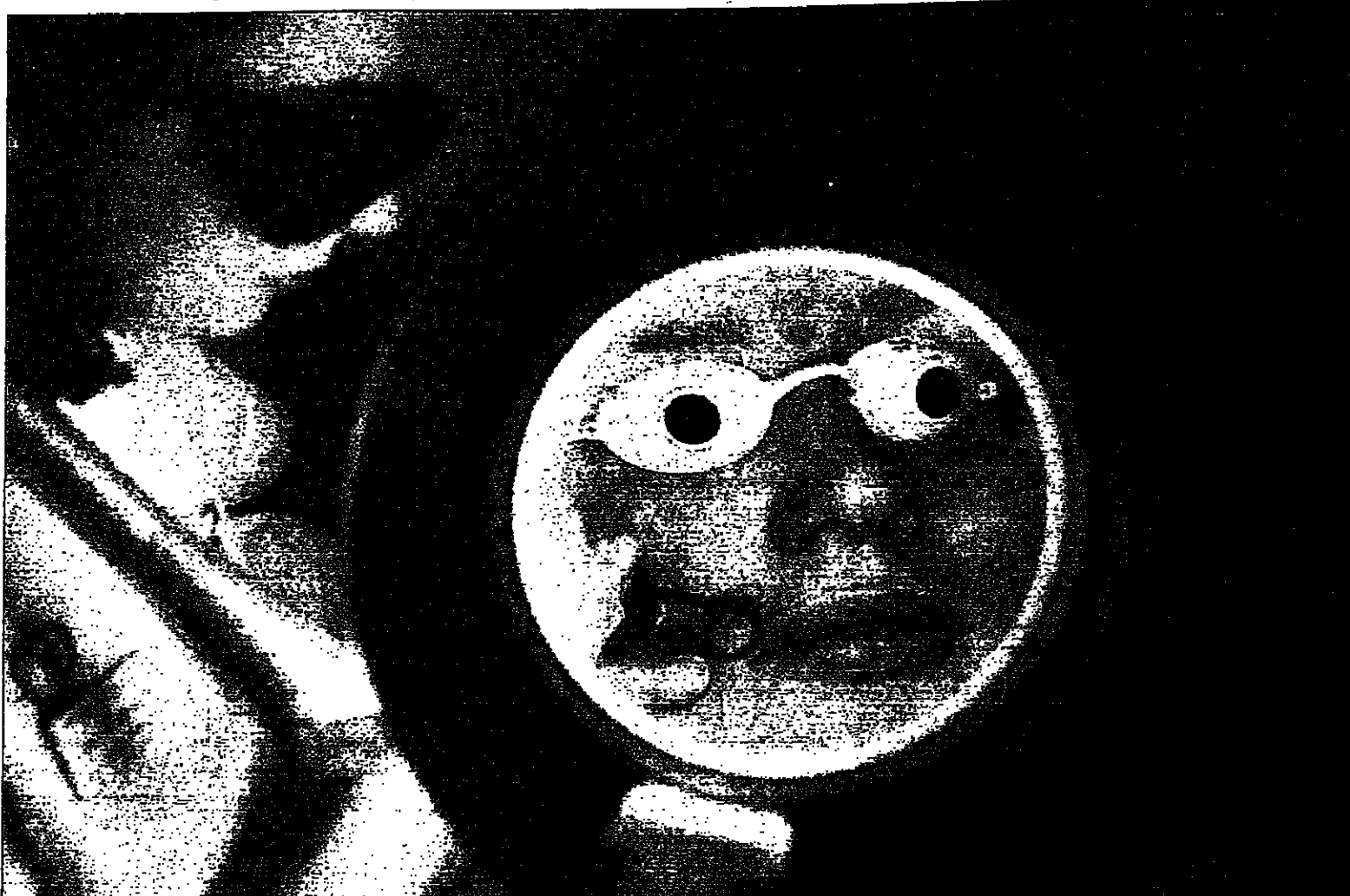
Michael Mansfield QC, counsel for the Lawrence family, said the inquiry would hear that the principal murder suspects had all moved around between each other's houses that night.

Cross-examined by Jeffrey Yearwood, counsel for the Commission for Racial Equality, Insp Groves - who has agreed that he often uses the word "coloured" to describe black people - said he did not believe that the term was offensive.

"Stephen was black, Stephen was coloured, there's no distinction," said Insp Groves, a former racial incidents officer in Stepney, an area of east London with a large ethnic minority population.

The inquiry was adjourned until Monday.

Laser razor puts an end to the most time-wasting chore men face



Ben Stroud, a Reuters trader, is seeking an end to the daily shaving that consumes hundreds of hours in the lives of most men, writes Jeremy Lawrence. Yesterday he started laser treatment on his face at the Harley Medical Group's City clinic which will permanently remove his facial hair.

Pulses of laser light are beamed at the face. The light passes through the skin and is absorbed by the melanin in the hair and hair root, causing it to burn. Patients report only a mild stinging. Eight 15-minute sessions are required for men with normal beards over six months. It should

clear at least 70 per cent of the hair so subsequent shaving is easier and less frequent. However, it costs £1,600 - enough to buy at least 30 years' worth of razor blades.

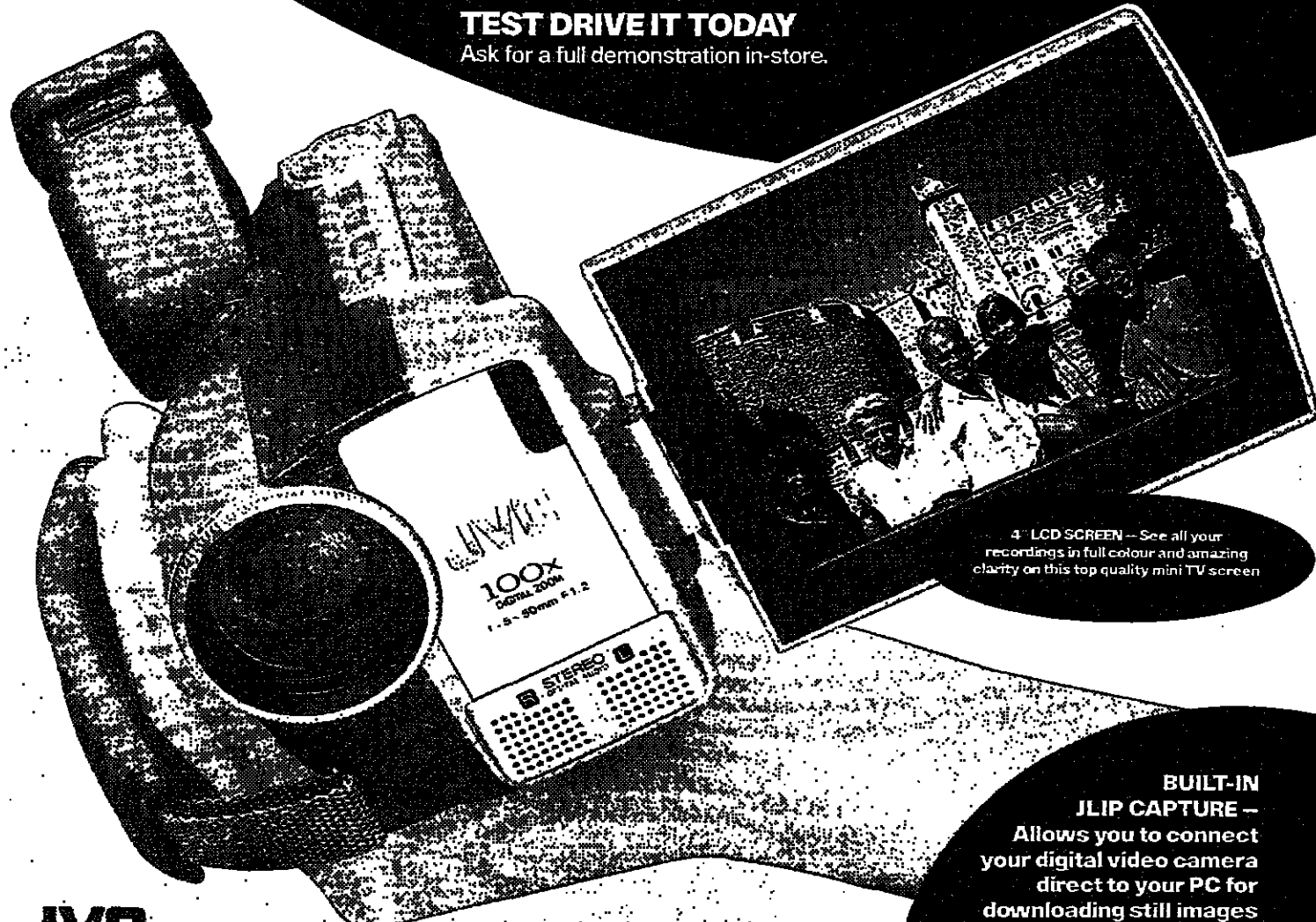
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With Houdini helping, I break my own record

THE GREAT Houdini yesterday took me to a personal altitude record in our expedition's preparation for the oxygen-thin air of Mount Everest.

Perhaps the biggest question mark over my chances on the Big One is my lack of high-altitude experience. The highest I had climbed before coming to the Himalayas was the summit of Mont Blanc, the highest peak in the Alps at 4,807m but not much more than half the height of Everest (8,848m).

Everyone on our Himalayan Kingdom's expedition has climbed to far more impressive altitudes than me. All three of the guides and two of the clients have been above 8,000m - into the so-called death zone - and the others have all been above 6,000m.

Had the addition of a journalist to the Everest team not appealed to Himalayan Kingdom's appetite for publicity, I would probably have been advised to try a more modest mountain trip for starters. Altitude sickness can be a killer, and along with the weather is the biggest reason for climbers failing on high mountains.



STEPHEN GOODWIN
Everest Diary
Dingboche, Nepal

So my middle-aged body's ability to cope has been my biggest worry, the sort of thing the mind dwells on in the middle of the night in the lodges on the walk-in, when the snores and clumping to the rudimentary toilet keeps you awake.

Yesterday's small earthquake, when five of our group climbed to a rocky peak at 5135m, above the Sherpa village of Dingboche, did not banish all my apprehensions about altitude, but it was a welcome fillip. And Houdini's part in it?

The great escapologist was the character whose name we tried to guess in a form of the Any Questions quiz that we played on our 750m climb. Dave Walsh, our guide, uses the game to stop groups from trying to ascend too fast. If you can talk, the pace is about

right, and you do not become breathless.

Health and acclimatisation are necessary obsessions with expeditions such as ours. "Is anybody crook?" was Sundeepp Dhillion's first question at breakfast yesterday. As the team doctor, Sundeepp, who serves with 23 Parachute Field Ambulance, has a very direct interest. He has already had to treat Rob Owen for a gut infection which left the London stockbroker an expert on the long-drop toilets of the Khumbu. He is now fully recovered.

Physicist David Calloway from New York also dosed himself with Bimox yesterday to clear an altitude headache.

Besides the medical kit, we have also taken out more spiritual insurance. Before arriving in Dingboche, we stopped at the Buddhist monastery at Pangboche, where a lama blessed our expedition.

The lengthy service, with the lama chanting and banging a large cheese-shaped drum, was all in Tibetan, unintelligible not only to us, but also to the Sherpas. However, as Nina, an Everest summiteer, said afterwards, understanding the words was not important, what matters is to believe.

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هنا من الأرحل

Here be monsters – and they may not be so far fetched



Museum piece: Professor Chris Stringer holding the skull of a giant ape which may have been a precursor of the Yeti Photograph: Andrew Burman

By Kate Watson-Smyth

The Unicorn's eye fell upon Alice... "What is this?" he said at last.

"This is a child," Haigha said eagerly... "We only found it today. It's as large as life and twice as natural."

"I always thought they were fabulous monsters," said the Unicorn.

Alice began: "Do you know, I always thought Unicorns were fabulous monsters too..."

"Well, now that we have seen each other," said the Unicorn. "If you'll believe in me, I'll believe in you. Is that a bargain?"

"If you like," said Alice.

From *Through the Looking Glass* by Lewis Carroll.

SOMEWHERE deep in the unexplored jungles of South-east Asia, the Yeti could still be lurking.

Skulls belonging to a giant ape that was at least 7ft tall have been found there, and many scientists believe they may have been the precursor of the Yeti.

An exhibition at London's Natural History Museum has brought together the mythological tales of fantastic creatures such as the Cyclops, the Yeti and the dragon, and the scientific evidence in an effort to unravel fact from fiction.

Stories of giant, hairy human-like creatures living in remote mountain ranges and

forests have persisted throughout history and, using fossilised skulls, scientists at the museum have created a 10ft tall Yeti which chews on bamboo and roars menacingly at the humans below.

Professor Chris Stringer, director of palaeontology at the museum, believes the Yeti may well exist, but not in the Himalayas. "Explorers have returned with tales of giant footprints but we know that they can be distorted when they thaw and re-freeze so that is not compelling evidence," he said.

"However, we know that *gigantopithecus*, a 7ft tall gorilla-like animal, lived on bamboo shoots in the forests of South-east Asia and it could be closely related to the Yeti.

"There is no hard evidence to prove or disprove the theory and there are enormous areas of South-east Asia that have not been explored so we cannot rule it out completely."

The exhibition also explores the myth of the Cyclops which, according to Greek legend, were a race of fear-some giants living in caves.

Gnawing on a bloody goat's leg, the re-creation of this monster casts a terrifying glare around the gallery with its single giant eye.

But scientists now believe that fossil bones of dwarf elephants, which used to live on the Mediterranean islands, may have given rise to the myth. The huge nasal socket in the skull, which was in fact the base of the elephant's trunk, resembles an eye hole and the remains of the tusks look like giant teeth.

Dr Angela Milner, a leading expert on dinosaurs, said: "The ancient Greeks would never have seen elephants so it was a natural association to assume that the skull belonged to a giant one-eyed man."

"We have found scientific explanations for most of the monsters that exist in legend and in many cases there is a logical explanation."

The unicorn has long been popular in legend with tales of the healing power of its horn but scientists believe the myth could have arisen from the discovery of a rhinoceros skull.

Popular in both Oriental and Christian mythology, the dragon could have been born out of exaggerated tales of giant lizards seen by travellers. Later discoveries of dinosaur skulls fuelled the myth.

But sadly for believers in the Loch Ness monster, the news is not good. Recent explorations of the loch did indeed discover new species – but nothing bigger than a microscopic worm.

■ "Myths and Monsters" opens on Sunday 5 April and runs until 13 September at the Natural History Museum. Admission: £6 adults, £3 children.

Heroin substitute sold by doctor killed drug addict

By Jason Bennetto
Crime Correspondent

TOUGHER measures to curb the prescription of methadone by private doctors was urged yesterday following fresh concerns at the rising death toll among addicts using the drug.

A leading coroner called on Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, to set up an inquiry into the apparent easy availability of methadone, used as a supposedly less dangerous substitute for heroin. This followed the latest methadone fatality – a 41-year-old woman from Chelsea, south-west London, who had been paying £30 a week for her drugs from a private doctor.

The number of deaths among notified addicts caused by over-dosing on methadone rose in England and Wales to 116 in 1995 from 74 in 1993; it now makes up about one-fifth of all fatal overdoses among registered addicts. The number of methadone notified addicts dying from poisoning increased to 154 in 1995, also a record total. About 14,000 people in England and Wales were registered as methadone addicts in 1996.

Last year, methadone killed three times as many people in

Scotland as heroin – 91 people died from the drug as opposed to 31 heroin deaths.

A Department of Health working group is looking into the issue of how best to help people withdraw from heroin use, which includes the issue of methadone. There is evidence, backed by recent Home Office research, of a flourishing black-market in methadone often linked to lax prescribing practices.

Dr Paul Knapman, the Westminster coroner, yesterday expressed his worries about the availability of the drug after hearing how Stephanie Jean Lea, 41, died after overdosing on methadone last February. Dr Knapman recorded a verdict of death by methadone intoxication caused by drug dependency.

The inquest at Westminster coroner's court was told that Mrs Lea paid a weekly sum of £30 to her private doctor in exchange for a cocktail of drugs, before she was struck off last November. Reading a statement from an earlier hearing by Mrs Lea's husband, Dr Knapman said: "Mr Lea says it is simple. He suggests that if you have the money then you can get drugs. He says it is like a business transaction that doctors know about."

But Mrs Lea's former doctor, Dr Tom Onen, described her as a "chronic drug addict" and blamed the increase in methadone deaths on lack of funding which meant inadequate services.

After the inquest, Dr Knapman disclosed that he had written to the Home Secretary last month voicing his concerns about methadone prescriptions.

His letter said: "I hope that you may consider a review of the present situation whereby any doctor may prescribe injectable methadone privately to any patient, and to consider a review of monitoring procedures with a view to possible regulation."

Methadone-related deaths are frequently linked to a thriving black market where it is sold as a cut-price fix. Drug dealers posing as heroin addicts defraud the health service of hundreds of thousands of pounds a year, duping gullible clinics and GPs into giving them the liquid drug and then selling it on at prices way below those commanded for other class A drugs.

According to Home Office officials and medical experts, many doctors' surgeries are targeted by dealers who see them as a "soft touch".



For Simon Jenkins, all the answers he wants, on the Internet.

Shocking look at mental illness

MENTAL-HEALTH campaigners yesterday launched a hard-hitting campaign to improve the way society and the media treat the mentally ill, writes Glenda Cooper.

It contrasts racial abuse with words used to categorise those with mental problems. A poster by Trevor Beattie's GGT agency poses the question: "Nigger, wop, coon, chink, yid, paki, honky, kraut, wog – unacceptable racial abuse? Loony, mong, nutter, psycho moron, div – acceptable forms of mental abuse?" Mr Beattie said: "These words, unfortunately, are in common usage. 'What I've done is try to crystallise... a complex issue and put it starkly. We've run up 50 posters and we'll put them up wherever we're allowed to."

Paul Boateng, health minister, who was at the launch, said stigma and fear can drive people with mental illness away from help and treatment with potentially serious results.

One in four people is affected by mental illness, a World Health Organisation report says that by 2020 more people will suffer from mental than physical ailments. The charity Mind, which is leading the campaign, said it hopes to make people confront the realities of the illness.

Mental patients failing to take their medication is the principal factor in 60 per cent of killings carried out by care in the community patients, the Zito Trust said yesterday in a report that looked at 35 inquiries into homicides by the mentally ill since 1992.

Girls face DNA tests

ABOUT 100 girls who were absent from school the day a newborn baby was found strangled, including some 12-year-olds, are to be asked to give DNA samples by the police hunting for the infant's mother, writes Jason Bennetto.

The mass screening, believed to be the first time police have used DNA in a suspected infanticide case, was criticised yesterday by a civil liberty group as "so coercive it might as well be compulsory".

Detectives are writing to the parents of girls in Warrington, Cheshire, asking for permission to carry out the tests. The baby boy's body was found dumped in a bin bag three weeks ago in a wood close to a theme park on the outskirts of the town. The infant had been strangled within two hours of birth.

A police spokesman said the testing would involve mouth swabs. Girls as young as 12 will be included in the testing. "It is a process of elimination that is vital to any inquiry. We want to eliminate everything on the periphery so we can focus on the nub of the inquiry."

Police are still hunting two men aged around 18, one of them carrying a bin liner, seen near the spot where the body was discovered.

John Wadham, director of Liberty, said: "This approach must seem even more coercive to teenage girls that it would to adults; they will be under pressure not only from the police, but also from their school and their parents – it must be almost impossible for any of them to refuse."

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Aim to wipe out sink estates within 10 years

By Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

THE Government hopes to wipe out the blight of more than a thousand "sink estates" over the next decade, Jack Straw said yesterday.

Speaking of the Government's long-term aims, the Home Secretary said: "I think there's a good chance that there will emerge from all this in 10 years' time a society in which class divisions are much less marked. We will hopefully have a combination of the best of the States and the Netherlands, where the searing class divisions in our society are no longer noticeable."

But in an interview with the *New Statesman* magazine, Mr Straw added: "You won't have these estates where the casualties of the past 18 years have been dumped, and our reforms will make state education more attractive to the middle classes."

A senior ministerial source told *The Independent* that the Government planned to bring "in from the cold" the 10 per cent of the population who were currently excluded from mainstream society. "You raise their self-esteem, give them back a stake in society, you give them a higher and more honestly secured income, you raise their educational skills, and their social skills, and by doing so you will actually improve their health," the source said.

When the Prime Minister set up a Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Unit last year, he ordered three specific reports: on truancy and school exclusions; rough sleepers; and the "worst estates".

The sink estates report is expected to go to ministers by June, and will deal with the development of "integrated and sustainable approaches to the problems of the worst housing estates, including crime, drugs,

unemployment, community breakdown, bad schools etc".

The Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions, estimates on the basis of the 1991 census that there are 1,370 deprived local authority estates in England alone, with 64 per cent of them in London.

Deprivation is measured on the basis of unemployment, children in low-earning households, overcrowding, households lacking basic amenities, lack of cars, educational participation at 17, long-term unemployment ratios, income support recipients, low educational attainment, mortality rates as a health measure, household contents insurance grading as a measure of crime, and land dereliction.

The Social Exclusion Unit has said that a study of 20 of the most deprived estates found that 23 per cent of estate-linked schools achieved no GCSEs at grades A to C—more than twice

the national average "failure" rate—and that people living in high crime areas such as the estates were ten times more likely to be the victims of crime.

It also said that in areas where more than half of homes were council housing, unemployment was generally more than twice as high as the average for England; there were twice as many lone parent households; and 50 per cent more long-term sick.

The priority being given to social exclusion as a policy issue had been illustrated by the fact that Tony Blair has taken a personal interest in steering the work of the unit, and the fact that he has agreed to chair one "summit" on each of the issues being examined.

He chaired a meeting on truancy and school exclusion in December, and "summits" on rough-sleepers and the sink estates are expected during the summer.

Archer pressed on his share dealings

By Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

THE Tory spokesman on London last night said that Lord Archer had to "face up to questions" about his past share dealings after the best-selling author was pursued over the allegations at the launch of the all-party campaign for a "yes" vote for the London mayor.

The spokesman Richard Otway, who attended the all-party launch, said: "These are questions Jeffrey has got to face up to and I am sure he will."

Lord Archer reinforced his campaign to be adopted as the Tory candidate in a Centre for Policy Studies pamphlet, *A Better Deal for London*, claiming the capital needed a mayor who could "make a difference".

He said Londoners "pay more and get less", contributing £12bn more in taxes per year than they

get in government expenditure.

The Government is confident of a big "yes" vote in the London referendum on 7 May, but the Cabinet devoted part of its weekly meeting to discussing the threat of big Labour losses in the local elections on the same day.

The Scottish elections next year are causing more concern to ministers as a test of Labour's popularity in its heartlands in the run-up to the next general election. A third special adviser is to be appointed by Donald Dewar to help the Secretary of State for Scotland spearhead Labour's fight back against the Scottish National Party for elections to the new parliament.

The Prime Minister's spokesman said: "The Scottish elections are going to be hugely important. There have been discussions about putting together a long-term strategy that Donald Dewar will be involved in."

Blackpool landlords in £5m benefit fraud

By Anthony Bevins

LANDLORDS – and presumably the ubiquitous landlady – in Blackpool could be defrauding the taxpayer out of up to £5m.

Pervasive weaknesses in housing benefit controls have been uncovered by the first report of the new Benefit Fraud Inspectorate, following a detailed investigation of resort.

Harriet Harman, Secretary of State for Social Security, said last night: "Fraudulent landlords are stealing millions of pounds every year from the public purse. Tackling fraud is a fundamental part of our reform of the welfare system."

But today's report from the inspectorate had little hard evidence to add to existing estimates on the scale of landlord fraud. Instead, it repeats what Frank Field's Commons Social Security Select Committee in-

vestigation claimed in 1996, "that between 10 per cent and 20 per cent of benefit paid to landlords involves fraud".

The conclusion of the inspectorate is that: "Blackpool paid out nearly £33.4m rent allowance in 1996-97 of which they estimate 70 per cent went direct to landlords."

"We calculate, using the Social Security Committee estimate, that the fraud in rent paid to landlords in Blackpool during 1996-97 is between £2.3m and £4.7m."

The report says that control over landlord fraud is so weak that Blackpool does not even know how many landlords are getting benefit. Some had received over-payments of more than £9,000, and the report says that even though there had been only nine prosecutions in 1995-96, the borough was in the top 10 per cent of prosecuting authorities.

Sick Gulf veteran takes protest to No 10

By Ian Burrell



Gulf veteran Ian Dunne and his son, Reece, at the MoD yesterday. Photograph: David Ross

A SICK Gulf War veteran carried his seriously ill baby to the Ministry of Defence yesterday to highlight the suffering of many children born to troops who fought in the conflict.

Ian Dunne, 28, who served with the RAF's 66 Squadron, said that his eight-month-old son, Reece, had been born with congenital heart disease.

Mr Dunne is convinced that his son's illness is directly linked to the deterioration in his own health since he returned from the Gulf. "I feel as though I am mentally grinding to a halt. I feel as though I'm dying," he said.

After returning from the war in 1991, Mr Dunne left the RAF and became an officer with Thames Valley Police. But his police career lasted only 18 months as he was obliged to retire on health grounds.

"I never used to be like this. I have mountain-biked up Mt Snowdon and I used to run half-marathons," he said. "Now I get muscle spasms, twitches, shooting pains in my joints and down my arms."

Although he has a healthy son by a previous marriage, Mr Dunne's attempts to raise a family with his second wife, Barbara, have been fraught with problems. Mrs Dunne had a miscarriage in her first pregnancy and Reece nearly died soon after being born. He has Down's syndrome and a narrowing of the aortic arch, which restricts the blood flow to the lower half of his body.

Jo Masters, a solicitor with London firm Hodge, Jones & Allen, said yesterday that more than 100 babies born to veterans of the Gulf conflict had become seriously ill. "There seems to be a link," she said. "There are a lot of children being born with heart problems."

Yesterday Mr Dunne, from Basingstoke, Hampshire, also handed a letter to 10 Downing Street to protest at the lack of government support for the families of sick Gulf veterans.

The Armed Forces minister, John Reid, admits to being greatly concerned by the condition of some of the veterans and has ordered that research into the nature of Gulf War illnesses is made a top priority.

Brown gets serious over soaring pound

GORDON Brown yesterday dropped his dour image and emerged as the cheerful Chancellor, describing life next door to the Blairs in Downing Street, writes Colin Brown.

Mr Brown said there was the sound of Oasis, guitars gently strumming, and French lessons from his next door neighbours.

"And this is before you hear the kids come home," he said.

The Chancellor also joked at a press gallery luncheon at Westminster about the faxes sent to ministers by Alastair Campbell, the Prime Minister's official spokesman, warning them to stop briefing the press.

"He did send me a fax reminding me about Budget parade. He said I couldn't speak about a number of things – I shouldn't mention Murdoch and the press, spin doctors, and I wasn't to overshadow today's story. I had to speak briefly because I didn't want any psychological flaws to be revealed."

"He said I should spend some time on the big picture... but that is difficult because Derry Irvine has commandeered them."

But the one thing Mr Brown said he could not joke about was the euro. With the pound rising, and jobs being threatened, that is no laughing matter.

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Rain dances

Blast at Laz

Albania halve

Unproved Aids drug is tested on humans

NO ONE can quite figure out why the South African government is championing Virodene, a homegrown "cure" for Aids, even though it has been thoroughly panned by the medical establishment.

The government's dogged support for the drug, whose main constituent is an industrial solvent, is being linked to threats to abolish the Medicine Controls Council (MCC), the body responsible for drug safety.

Medical experts and opposition parties say it is no coincidence that the attacks on the MCC come after it refused to lift the ban on Virodene. The MCC says the drug is toxic and there is no scientific evidence to support claims that it can halt HIV and even cure Aids.

The government is furious. Thabo Mbeki, the president-in-waiting, has even said the MCC is "denying dying Aids sufferers mercy treatment".

The African National Congress has suggested that the MCC is stifling Virodene research because it has hidden financial links with international pharmaceutical companies. The MCC has denied this.

Though he retained a diplomatic silence this week, that must hurt the MCC's chairman Professor Peter Folb, a man of impeccable medical and anti-apartheid credentials.

The Virodene controversy began more than a year ago when three University of Pretoria scientists suddenly announced they had discovered an Aids wonder drug. The "breakthrough" stunned a scientific field which had never heard of Olga Visser, Professor Dirk du Plessis and Dr Callie Landauer - a heart surgery team. Small wonder, for the trio had broken every rule in the scientific

The South African government is under attack over its support for a controversial 'cure'.

Mary Braid reports

research book. Their work had never been published or submitted for peer review. Worse still, they had already tested Virodene on Aids patients without permission from the university's ethics committee, or the MCC.

The medical establishment's wrath descended, but it was soon clear the team - which had formed a company, Cryo-Preservation Technologies (CPT), and patented its find - had powerful backers. It had already presented its research to a cabinet meeting organised by the health minister, Dr Nkomo Zuma, attended by Mr Mbeki.

Seeking government funding CPT took along two of the seven Aids patients already taking the drug. They claimed to feel much better. Government support has not wavered since, despite the scandal of the original illegal human testing and a police investigation into claims that CPT was still dispensing the banned drug late last year.

A study into Virodene by an American researcher, which concluded that the drug not only did not combat the HIV virus but might even accelerate its spread, did not dampen the government's enthusiasm either. Dr Salim Abdool Karim, head of Aids research at the Medical Research Council, said this week that Virodene's claims were still "hopelessly unconvincing".

Other Aids experts have been more scathing. "They say Virodene kills the virus," said one. "So does bleach but, I wouldn't inject it into patients."

Though there are desperate sufferers willing to give any "cure" a try, Aids patient organisations are also giving the "discovery" a wide berth. The National Association of People with Aids agrees there should be no human trials until the Virodene team has more evidence to offer. "Like everyone else I am baffled by the government's motivation," said Dr Karim.

The government certainly faces a crisis. South Africa now has one of the fastest growing HIV epidemics in the world. Like the rest of the continent it has the greatest need and the least money for the expensive anti-HIV medicines now used in the West.

Have Mr Mbeki and Ms Zuma simply become carried away by their desperation to find a cheap local cure - a month's course of Virodene costs \$34 (£21) - that cuts out the international pharmaceutical companies?

Even admirers of Ms Zuma, who is waging a war with drug multinationals for cheaper medicines, are worried by the attack on the MCC. "There's no reason to replace the MCC, unless you just want 'yes' men," said one academic.



Young victims: A helper feeds a baby Aids sufferer in South Africa, which has one of the world's fastest-growing HIV epidemics. Photograph: Gideon Mendel/Network

Yeltsin offers foes a place in cabinet

By Phil Reeves
in Moscow

BORIS YELTSIN, who has a reputation for being autocratic, made a rare concession to his parliamentary foes yesterday by offering to discuss a new cabinet with them, to replace the one he sacked *en masse* last week.

As the outcry over his greenhorn nominee for prime minister gathered momentum, the president said he would consider including some of his rivals in the cabinet - a move which, if ever fulfilled, would be seen as a step back from Russia's transition to a market economy. Before his re-election in 1996, reports circulated that Mr Yeltsin had been considering establishing a government of national unity, involving all the main parties. But he acted otherwise, leaning heavily towards the market economists in his team and extracting deals from parliament by tough horse-trading.

Yesterday, however, he showed signs of softening - although a Kremlin spokesman was quick to scotch suggestions that he was considering a

coalition government. At talks with the leaders of both houses of parliament in his country residence outside Moscow, he agreed to convene round table talks with trade union leaders, regional representatives and parliamentarians on forming a new government. He also suggested that the two chambers propose candidates for a new cabinet at that meeting - although he already appears to have decided on several key posts, including the foreign, defence and interior ministers.

Mr Yeltsin's offer is part of an attempt to coax a recalcitrant State Duma, or lower houses, into approving Sergei Kiriyenko as the head of the government, replacing Viktor Chernomyrdin, who was fired on 23 March. Mr Yeltsin has threatened to dissolve parliament if it does not give its approval - although few observers expect it to come to that. It must reject Mr Kiriyenko three times before being disbanded.

The President's offer was swiftly rejected by the Communists, the largest parliamentary party.

Rain douses Amazon fires

RAIN has put out virtually all the fires raging in the savannah and jungles of Brazil's northern Amazon, but one official warned there was still a risk of new outbreaks. Satellite images showed that more than 95 per cent of the worst Amazon fires on record had been extinguished by heavy rains on Tuesday and Wednesday, the Brazilian Agricultural Research Company said. Fires set by subsistence farmers and fuelled by a drought linked to the El Nino weather phenomenon have raged for more than two months in Roraima, ravaging an area the size of Lebanon, according to an official estimate.

— Reuters, Brasilia

Blast at Latvian synagogue

A SYNAGOGUE belonging to the Lubavitch Hassidic movement was bombed before dawn yesterday in the Latvian capital Riga. The powerful blast damaged the building and smashed windows in nearby houses. The same synagogue was bombed in May 1995. Those responsible for that bombing have not been found.

— AP, Moscow

Albania halves police force

ALBANIA intends to cut its police force nearly in half this year in an effort to make it more effective in fighting increasing crime, the interior ministry said yesterday. Spokesman Artan Bishaga said around 8,000 posts out of a police staff of 17,500 would be axed by October.

At least 84 policemen have been killed in the past year. Around 50 police officers from Western countries have been in Albania since last year training the local force.

— Reuters, Tirana

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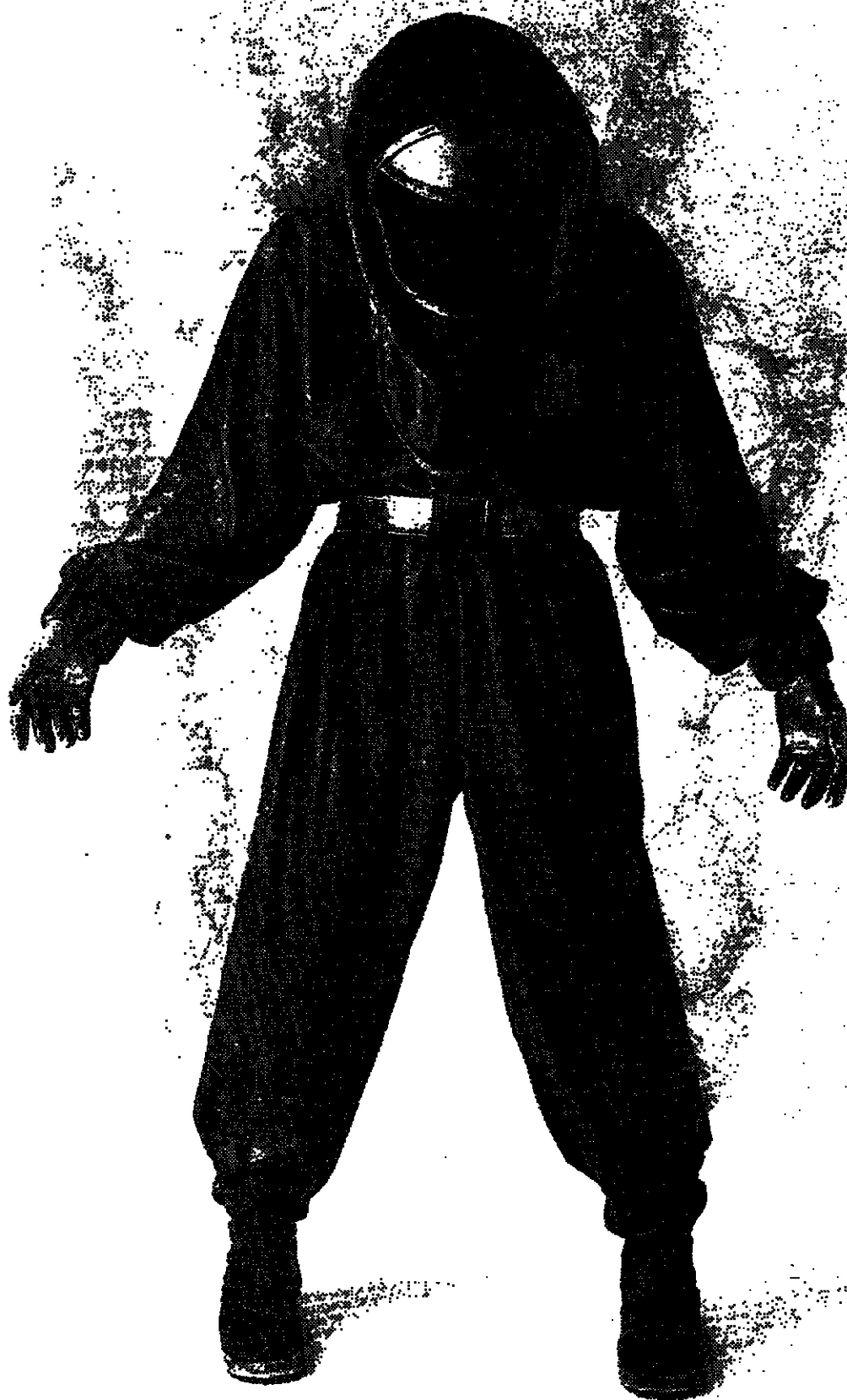
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هكذا من الأسهل

Clinton rejoices as America smiles on end of Paula Jones

By Mary Dejevsky
in Washington

PRESIDENT Bill Clinton was riding high yesterday following the dismissal by an Arkansas judge of all sexual harassment charges against him. Across the United States, he appeared to have emerged from his ordeal with his political persona totally unscathed, even enhanced.

First opinion polls showed Americans approved of the decision by two to one. Random vox pops on the streets of US cities showed men and women alike welcoming what they saw as the end of a sordid and tiresome succession of allegations. They largely agreed with Judge Susan Webber Wright that even if Paula Jones's accusation - that Mr Clinton had exposed himself to her and asked for oral sex - was true, it was a coarse and

offensive act, but did not amount to sexual harassment.

President Clinton, while careful not to appear to gloat, was said to be "overjoyed" - a few notches up from the "pleased" he admitted to through his spokesman the previous evening. Behind the scenes, his delight and relief were caught by Fox News, which filmed him in his hotel room in Dakar with a broad smile, a bongos drum in his hand and a cigar (unlit) in his mouth.

He had cancelled a scheduled dinner and remained in his suite for a private dinner with his wife, Hillary.

Ms Jones was described as "devastated". The conservative Rutherford Institute, which has funded her case, stood by its intention to appeal, but legal specialists united in advising that an appeal stood little chance

against the force and clarity of Ms Webber Wright's arguments. Ms Jones's determination to proceed also seemed to be in question. Her public relations adviser, Susan Carpenter McMillan, who insists she is not being paid for her services, said: "I just hope she has the strength to go on."

As well as ruling that Ms Jones's allegations did not constitute a case for sexual harassment, Ms Webber Wright said she had suffered no emotional or professional damage from her rebuttal of Mr Clinton, then state governor.

The judgment from Arkansas does not end Mr Clinton's problems. The four-year criminal investigation instituted over the speculative Whitewater land deal, and allegations of a White House cover-up, continues.

Yesterday the independent prosecutor in the case, Kenneth Starr, called Mr Clinton's chief of staff, Erskine Bowles, to testify in the case, stressing as he went into the courthouse that his investigation was unaffected by the dismissal of the Paula Jones case.

Nor does it put an end to all the sex allegations. The accusation that the President falsely denied an affair with a White House trainee, Monica Lewinsky, and induced her to lie about it under oath, is part of Mr Starr's criminal investigation. Ms Lewinsky could still be compelled to testify, were she to retract her denial of an affair with Mr Clinton. He would be liable to answer charges of perjury and suborning a witness - charges that could be grounds for impeachment.

Whatever Mr Starr says, the Jones ruling is likely to affect his investigation. The whole Lewinsky saga originated when she was summoned to testify in the Jones case. Any perjury committed by her or Mr Clinton derived from a case now dead, so the purpose of proceeding must be in question.

This week's ruling is also likely to confirm Mr Clinton's high approval rating, increase scepticism of Mr Starr's investigation and make any move towards impeachment less likely.

One view expressed yesterday, that Mr Clinton and the presidency had suffered serious "collateral damage" from all the sex allegations (which were in no way disproved by Ms Webber Wright's judgment), also seemed questionable. The public has had its fun: it now seems happy to allow that Mr Clinton's sex life is his private business.

First Couple appeal to home vote from the slaves' door of no return

By Mary Braid

IT WAS expected to be an emotive and calculated address to African-Americans back home; and President Bill Clinton's farewell "slave fort" speech at the end of his 11-day African tour was exactly that.

Mr Clinton was standing on Goree Island, off the coast of Senegal, near the infamous slave fort's saddest spot - "the door of no return" where an inscription reads "From this door they went their eyes fixed on the infinity of suffering."

As many as 20 million Africans passed through doors like this along Africa's west coast on their way to slavery in the Americas. Today the picturesque Goree Island is a lure for legions of black Americans in search of their roots. Some still blame the failure of African Americans to "make it" in the US on the terrible legacy of this trade in human beings.

While acknowledging the "murderous" passage of African slaves to the New World, Mr Clinton steered away

from anything that could be construed as an apology for slavery in the United States. Before the tour Susan Rice, US assistant secretary of state for African affairs, had warned there would not be one. First, she said, Mr Clinton planned to look to the future not the past. Her second point was more divisive. Slavery was a trade she said and there were buyers and sellers; a clear reference to the Africans who rounded up their own countrymen for sale.

Nothing that the descendants of slaves became American citizens, Mr Clinton said: "The long journey of African-Americans proves that the spirit can never be enslaved." His only direct reference to slavery came in a cautiously worded and ambivalent passage, where he said: "Long after the slave ships stopped sailing to America, Goree Island...stands as a vivid reminder that for some of America's ancestors the journey to America was anything but a search for freedom and yet still a symbol of the bright new era of partnership between our peoples."

He repeated the chorus of this African tour: his administration was committed to building closer trade and security relations with the continent to which one in ten Americans can trace their ancestry. Few who come to Goree leave unmoved. President Mandela visited shortly after his release from his 27-year incarceration. When he emerged from a cramped slave cell he had little to say but his cheeks were wet with tears.

Goree fort guides do not spare the harrowing detail. They recount how captured Africans were treated worse than livestock. They arrived in chains and after inspection, pricing and branding, were crammed together in tiny cells. Fed once a day, they might languish here for months waiting to pass through the "door of no return" to waiting ships. Male slaves were only valued by their weight; females by their breast size, for that was considered an indication of fertility. Some African tribes were particularly valued "breeds" and their men were brought to the fort for stud.

All week Goree's residents and visitors have debated the coming Clinton visit. Some clearly thought it tacky and superficial. "What is this sudden interest in slavery?" asked Rosetta Gainey, whose African Diaspora Concerns Foundation has an office on the island. Her experience suggests the proffered new American-African partnership may prove one-sided and skin-deep. For years she has been lobbying Washington for US visas for members of the Kunta Kinte family made famous in Alex Haley's slave novel *Roots*. Each one has been turned down leaving the Kintes bitter about how their name was "exploited" in the US, though their desire to visit was turned down.

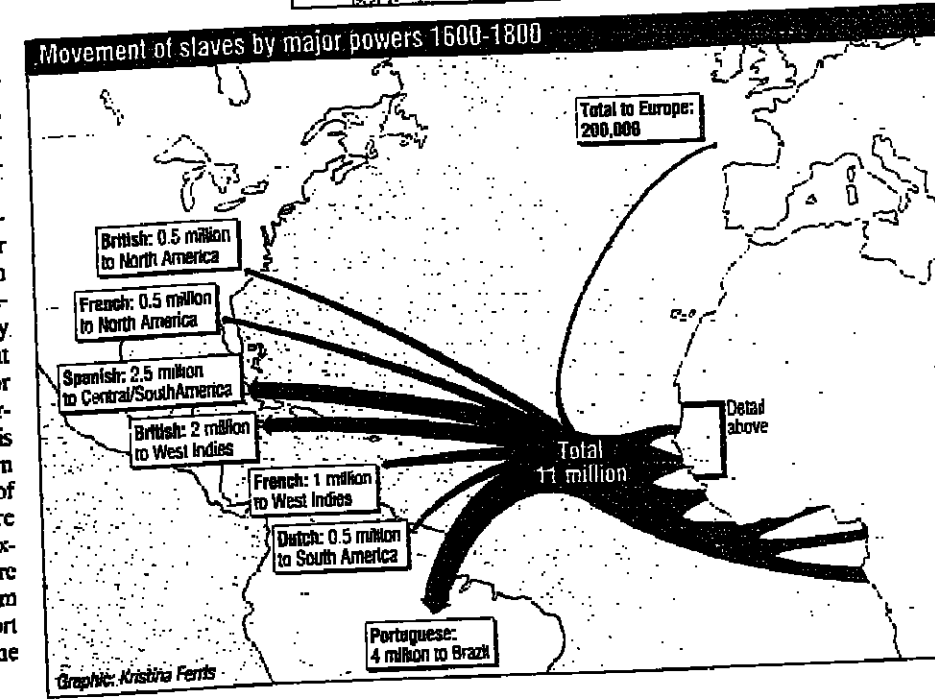
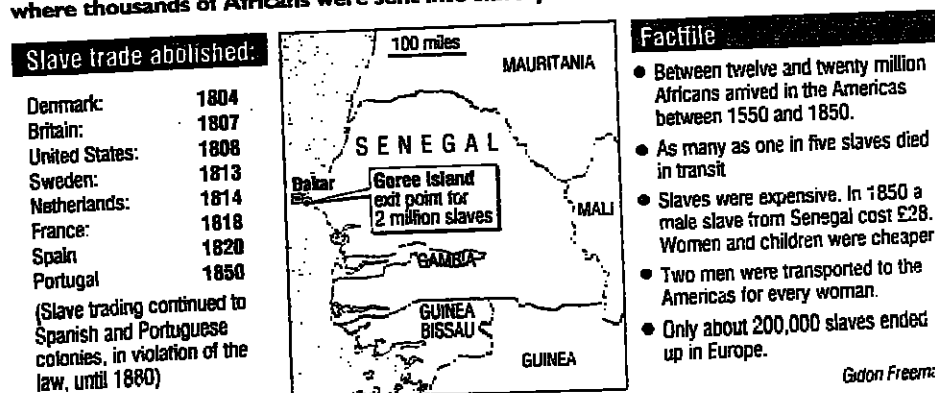
Jacob R Henderson Jr, a visiting African-American investor, argues: "The fact is America owes this continent a debt. This debt has not been repaid and Clinton must explore all means to repay that debt."

But other Goree visitors seem to agree with Ms Rice that in slavery sin was liberally spread. "We Africans were not particularly blameless," said Akua Pokua, 36, from Ghana. "The collaborators here sold the slaves...every one is to blame I guess."

The particularly careful wording and subdued delivery of Mr Clinton's speech yesterday, which had been billed as the culmination of his six-country tour, may also have reflected criticism at home over near-apologies for slavery that he had uttered earlier in his tour. In particular, his statement that "European Americans received the fruits of the slave trade, and we were wrong in that" went down extremely badly in Congress, where some Republicans accused him of selling the United States short abroad and impugning the country's dignity.



Bill Clinton and the first lady, Hillary Rodham Clinton, look out over the Atlantic Ocean from the "door of no return" at the slave house at Goree Island, off Senegal's coast, from where thousands of Africans were sent into slavery. Photograph: Greg Gibson/AP



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Everyday story of surreal folk living out the Magritte experience

THE pipe that is not a pipe (because it is a picture of a pipe), day in night, and the other bizarre juxtapositions which characterise the work of René Magritte are drawing crowds for a centenary retrospective. Coach parties of bossy Dutch women jostle with noisy school groups outside the Fine Arts museum for a chance to see the largest collection of works produced by the Thirties surrealist master.

It's the talk of the town and a great boost to Belgian pride, mainly because the French are coming in droves. Parisians who would not have been seen dead in a Brussels musée before are taking advantage of the new Paris-Brussels high-speed train, which has cut the journey time to 1 hour 25 minutes.

But you don't need to go to a Magritte exhibition to experience the surreal in Brussels. Why, for example, is there a discotheque in the dreary metro station at Schuman, the stop nearest the European Commission's now empty Berlaymont headquarters?

Other cities would have a newsagents or a flower shop, but here it's a discotheque. The oddest thing is that nobody seems to think it's strange.

Deep in the bowels of the next

BRUSSELS DIARY



Katherine Butler

tube stop down the line, also used by commuters and EU officials, is the ambitiously named Le Manhattan, striving for the ambience of New York with a set of flashing Christmas-tree lights around a fake Statue of Liberty at the entrance. One European civil servant I know of meets press contacts there for lunch. Which would be fine, except that it's also a topless bar.

An even odder collection of establishments is juxtaposed beside avant-garde designer clothes shops near the Stock Exchange in the dilapidated centre of town. Patrons of a bar called La Metro Valde always seem to be having more fun than anywhere else I know. They are mostly women "d'une certaine age" dancing with young Turkish men



Master strokes: Golconde, by Magritte, the surrealists' surrealist

Photograph: Bridgeman Art Gallery

who could be their grandsons. An occasional child roams around yawning, presumably waiting to be taken home.

The music comes from an electric keyboard played by a cheerful medieval-looking woman with no teeth and wild scraggy hair.

NEW EU statistics show the Brussels region is one of the three richest in Europe. Income per head is 72 per cent higher than the EU average, thanks mainly to the presence of the EU institutions. The opening up of borders with Eastern Europe, however, has

also shaken things up at the other end of the poverty scale. Local beggars have been forced to smarten up their act to compete with buskers and children from Romania or Albania who now work the public transport, system playing accordions. The other morning a smartly turned out man

of about 70 with a neat moustache started everyone by standing up in the tram. In French first, then Flemish, he delivered a carefully prepared speech explaining that he was one of the "real sans abri [homeless]" and if anyone would like to give him a cigarette, he'd be eternally grateful. The doors opened and a young woman with a baby wrapped in a shawl and carrying a plastic cup looked in. Seeing she'd been beaten to it, she turned back sadly to wait for the next one.

A certain doggedness about rules here can turn the simplest excursion into an ordeal. I found this out when I took my sister's little boy to the municipal swimming baths recently. I was vaguely aware of a rule about men's swimming trunks but thought as he's not even three and so tiny they couldn't object if he's wearing the wrong type. We were barely in the water when M le Maître Nageur, a man resembling a walrus, came over shaking his head and wagging his finger. "Madame," he began, (one always maintains a great deal of formality on these occasions) the child would have to get out of the pool unless he was prepared to adopt the correct mode of swimming costume. "Look," I pleaded. "We're

not staying long. He'll try if we take him out". The rule, apparently, has a twin aim: to preserve public decency (although why men who want to expose themselves would be put off merely by a closer fitting design is a mystery) and, secondly, to prevent boys swimming in the same shorts they wear "à l'extérieur".

Very sensible, but a toddler, and in winter, is manifestly not going around outside in shorts. While we were arguing, anxiety was taking hold in the pool as older boys dove-bombed into the kiddies' section, spreading terror among the little ones with impunity. The inconsistency of the zeal to apply the regulations seemed lost on the maître-nageur. The crisis was only resolved after we negotiated the "hire" of an approved pair (rental 75p) and surrendered an item of value as a hostage. Everyone except my nephew left the pool in a heightened state of stress.

On the way out I noticed the signs. A drawing of a man wearing a skimpy pair of men's briefs with the inscription "Maillot Classique" and a smug tick of approval beside him. Underneath, a drawing of a baggy type of swimming shorts and a stern cross drawn through that. "Ceci n'est pas un maillot classique," it said or something along those lines. The spirit of Magritte lives on.

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Papon guilty of role in sending Jews to their death

By John Lichfield in Paris

HISTORY finally caught up yesterday with Maurice Papon, the man who successfully fled his own history for 40 years. The former Vichy bureaucrat was convicted in Bordeaux of "complicity in crimes against humanity" and given a 10-year sentence for his role in the arrest and deportation of French Jews in 1942-44.

Papon, 87, immediately lodged an appeal in French courts and before the European Court of Human Rights. He returned to his home near Paris and it is possible, given his advanced age, that he may never serve a day in jail. It took 16 years to bring him to court and six months to try him.

The appeals procedure is likely to be equally protracted. Jewish organisations and relatives of French Holocaust victims spoke of their "relief" at his conviction but many were disappointed his sentence was not longer. He is the first official of the collaborationist Vichy regime, which ruled from 1940 to 1944, to be tried specifically for involvement in the deportation of Jews.

After retiring for 18 hours, the nine jurors and three magistrates forming the jury found him guilty of some, but not all, the specific allegations.

Papon was acquitted of involvement in the "assassination" of Jews from the Bordeaux area, where he was a senior local official from 1942 to 1944. The jury, in effect, accepted his claim that he knew nothing at that time of the Nazi death camps. He was found guilty of taking part in the illegal arrest and arbitrary detention of Jews dispatched from Bordeaux to Paris in four convoys in 1942 and 1944.

He was acquitted of helping to organise four other convoys. This mixed verdict was enough to convict Papon of the overall charge of complicity in crimes against humanity.

It led the court, however, to impose a sentence of 10 years, half the term requested by the prosecution.

The partial conviction may also provide firm grounds for the appeal. If Papon was not aware of the death camps, or the Final Solution (a doubtful proposition), how can he be complicit in crimes against humanity?

Michel Touzet, a lawyer for the families of victims, said he regretted the court had rejected the assassination charge. None the less, he said, the conviction was of "great importance" considering the "mountain" of legal and political obstructions which had been overcome since Papon's wartime activities in Bordeaux had been uncovered in 1981. By that time, Papon had risen to become budget minister.

The Union of French Jewish Students said it was "profoundly disappointed" by the sentence, which "bore no relation" to the nature of the crime for which Papon was convicted. However, Serge Klarsfeld, a veteran French crusader for justice for Holocaust victims, congratulated the jury on a "courageous decision".

He said it amounted to a condemnation of all those French officials, down to the lowliest gendarme, who had participated in the arrest of Jews. Papon's principal lawyer, Jean-Marc Varaut, dismissed the verdict as "illicit" and a "conspiracy" intended to whitewash the French sense of shame about the Vichy years. "The jury has judged history; history will judge the jurors," he said.

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هنا من الاسفل

Palestinians bury chief Hamas bomb-maker

By Patrick Cockburn
in Ramallah

THE SCORCHED face of Muhyideen al-Sharif, 32, peered from the top of a striped green and white blanket, which concealed the rest of his mutilated body, as he was carried to his grave yesterday amid the pine trees of el-Bireh cemetery.

As he was being buried, the 6,000 mourners could already hear the crack of Israeli soldiers firing rubber bullets – in fact, half-inch steel balls with a thin coating of rubber – and eyes began to sting from clouds of tear-gas. "They are using some special gas," said one of the Palestinian boys hurling stones at Israeli troops as he was choked and held a piece of onion to his nose, the antidote used by rioters on the West Bank. It does not always work. Palestinian ambulances, sirens blaring, carried a dozen casualties away from the fighting.

The clash at el-Bireh cemetery is unlikely to be the last vi-

olence provoked by the mysterious death of Mr Sharif, chief bomb maker for the last two years to Izz el-Deen al-Qassem, the military wing of Hamas, the militant Islamic organisation. Some members of his funeral procession yesterday chanted: "Dear, dear Qassem, hit Tel Aviv."

Hamas is all too likely to do just that and there were soldiers posted yesterday at every street corner in Jerusalem. Guards at the main shopping mall in the city, housing several cinemas and many restaurants, were making almost frantic body searches of customers.

There are still two versions of how and why Mr Sharif died. The Palestinian police say he was shot three times, twice in the chest and once in the leg, some three hours before his body was placed near a garage in the West Bank town of Ramallah. A large bomb, containing some 110lb of explosives, was then detonated

by remote control, destroying the garage and a Fiat Uno car. The police do not say so, but the implication is that only Israeli security could be behind such an elaborate plot.

The Israeli version is that they did not kill Mr Sharif. They say the bullets in his body could have been blown there from an accidental explosion in a Hamas arsenal. They say that the explosive Hamas uses – triacetone – is very, very volatile. They hint that the Palestinian police might have been responsible themselves.

The truth may never be established, but Palestinians universally believe that Mr Sharif was assassinated by Israeli agents. First of all, he was the Hamas member most wanted by Israel as the man behind two bombings in Jerusalem last year. Second, his killing and the attempt to conceal it is like the attempt on the life of Khalid Meshal (a Hamas official) by Mossad, the Israeli foreign in-

telligence service, with poison gas in Amman last year. In each case great ingenuity went into covering the tracks of the killers, presumably in order to prevent revenge attacks.

Palestinians and Israelis are giving Mr Sharif an importance in death that he may never had in life. Trained as an electrical engineer at al-Quds University in Jerusalem, he was in jail for three years up to 1995. He is said to have supplied the explosives which killed 62 people in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Ashkelon in 1996. But the expertise needed to equip suicide bombers is not extensive. Israeli security says Hamas has the means to make attacks any time it wants to.

At Mr Sharif's family house at Beit Hanina, his brother Ibrahim said: "We believe he was assassinated by Israel." The family served sweet orange juice rather than the usual bitter coffee on the grounds that he had died a martyr.

Le Pen banned from public office

By John Lichfield
in Paris

JEAN-MARIE LE PEN, the leader of the French far-right, was banned from public life for two years yesterday after being found guilty of riotous behaviour on the campaign trail last May.

The court decision bars him from running for any public office, or voting, until 2000. It does not prevent him from continuing as President of the xenophobic National Front but could strengthen the hand of those within the party who would like to put him out to grass.

When the prosecution demanded the ban during the original court hearing in February, Mr Le Pen, 69, was visibly shaken. He said that such a punishment could bring his 50-year political career to a "premature end". While this may be exaggerated, it could certainly promote the already relentless rise of his smooth-talking number two, Bruno Mégret.

In a delayed judgment, Mr Le Pen was convicted by the court in Versailles of riotous and insulting behaviour during running street-battles in the small town of Mantes-la-Jolie, west of Paris. He was captured on television film screaming and grabbing at the clothes of the local Socialist candidate (now MP).



Jean-Marie Le Pen: Convicted of riotous and insulting behaviour Photograph: Brian Harris

Annette Peulvast-Bergeal. The court said yesterday that Mr Le Pen had "sought physical confrontation" with his opponents. Such "provocative and aggressive behaviour" was unworthy of a political leader and must be "severely punished".

Apart from the two-year suspension of his civic rights, Mr Le Pen was fined £2,000 and given a suspended three-month prison sentence. The NF announced that its leader would appeal.

If this fails, Mr Le Pen will

be prevented from leading the Front's list in the European elections next year. He will be stripped of the seat he won last month in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur regional assembly.

No parliamentary or presidential elections are scheduled until 2002 but Mr Le Pen would be banned if either poll was to be called early (which is not out of the question). Mr Le Pen is already under attack within his own party for his clumsy handling of local deals with centre-

right politicians last month, which did great damage to the moderate right but might have achieved more.

A younger generation of NF activists now scents a chance of real power. They have come to regard the brutal charisma of Mr Le Pen as more of a trap than an asset. Initially, the party will feel obliged to rally round its "martyred" and "victimised" leader; in the longer run, the ban, coupled with his age, might signal the end of the Le Pen era.

Thorn in flesh of Hussein faces jail

By Robert Fisk
in Beirut

THE MAN who kept the King Waiting is waiting to hear how Jordanian judges will deal with his latest spat with the royal family. The King, of course, is His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan. The man is Leith Shubellat, head of the Jordanian engineers' union and a leading member of the Muslim Brothers, who has been appearing in the country's State Security court charged with arranging an illegal demonstration – a protest against America's threat in February to bomb Iraq because it was forbidding United Nations arms inspectors access to Saddam Hussein's palaces.

He kept the King waiting last year when – following Israel's attempt to murder a Hamas leader in Amman – the Jordanian monarch turned up at the Al-Juwaida jail to release Mr Shubellat. He had been imprisoned on that occasion for criticising Queen Noor for weeping at the funeral of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Why, Mr Shubellat had asked, did the Queen show no emotion at the earlier murder, by Israel, of a Palestinian militant killed in Malta?

The King came to the prison to pick up Mr Shubellat but was told that Mr

Shubellat wanted time to say good-bye to his fellow inmates. King Hussein, as courteous a monarch as ever ruled a Middle East nation, duly waited in an ante-room while Mr Shubellat went the rounds of the prison to say goodbye to his friends, before driving the prisoner home in his own car.

Less generosity is likely to be shown Mr Shubellat now. Appearing cheerful and in good health in the State Security court again, Mr Shubellat, who was arrested on 19 February, says he has been well treated – but claims he never encouraged the illegal demonstration, in which one man died. He did speak against an American attack on Iraq; but King Hussein himself had been warning the United States and Britain not to launch an assault on Saddam Hussein.

In reality, Mr Shubellat is one of the most eloquent Jordanian voices to be raised against the so-called "peace process" between Israel and the Palestinians, and between Israel and Jordan. The collapse of the peace (largely conceded by the US this week) strengthens his stand. But the leader of Jordan's engineering union seems bound for another sojourn in the Al-Juwaida prison, with little hope this time of a visit from the King to unlock his jail door.

Milosevic calls for Kosovo vote

BELGRADE (Reuters) — The Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic yesterday called for a referendum to be held in Serbia to decide whether foreign mediators should help resolve the Kosovo crisis.

In a move to counter Western pressure for outside mediation, which he has rejected, President Milosevic told Serbia's president Milan Milutinovic in a letter that he was confident that his Kosovo policy enjoyed popular support. "An answer to whether this is true or not can only be given by the citizens," he said.

The United States and its European allies blame Mr Milosevic for police violence against the ethnic Albanian majority in Kosovo, where at least 80 Albanians, including women and children, were killed in a police crackdown on village strongholds of the separatist Kosovo Liberation Army in central Kosovo last month.

By urging a referendum to endorse the government, Mr Milosevic invited Serbs to repudiate Western support for Kosovo Albanians and accept the risk of further economic punishment.

The West has given Mr Milosevic until later this month to open talks on autonomy for the province.

Fear and loathing, page 18

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مكتبة الأصل

Put people first, urge Nobel winners

THE Asia-Europe summit starting in London today is about relationships between the states in the two regions. In these, economics dominate. Human rights do not.

Yesterday, however, powerful alternative voices could be heard, saying economics should not obscure human-rights. Three Nobel prize-winners addressed an "alternative state reception", by video and in person, at the Royal Institute in central London.

Aung San Suu Kyi, Nobel prize-winning leader of the Burmese pro-democracy movement, said in a message smuggled out of her country that it was "time everybody stopped trying to separate human rights from economics". She argued: "I am inclined to believe that a free and secure people have much more to contribute towards healthy trade relations

Steve Crawshaw on an 'alternative summit' sponsored by this paper

THE INDEPENDENT

than a repressed and insecure people."

The Dalai Lama, 1989 Nobel peace prize-winner, urged openness and honesty in dealing with China, whose Prime Minister, Zhu Rongji, received a warm welcome in London this week. "To quote two Tibetan expressions, 'The closer a friend, the more faults he will point out', and 'One never hears praise and appreciation from a true friend'."

Jose Ramos Horta, exiled leader of the East Timorese resistance and 1996 Nobel prize-winner, told guests at the Independent-sponsored recep-

tion: "Human rights are not only a moral imperative. Human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law are also the only real guarantee of peace and stability that are necessary for economic progress." Robin Cook, Foreign Secretary, met Mr Ramos Horta this week. He received "assurances" that Mr Cook would raise the East Timor issue with his Indonesian counterpart, but few are under any illusions that such matters will be centre-stage.

On the relationship with China, too, rights play little more than a symbolic role. The ghosts of Tiananmen Square

have become an irrelevance to the EU-China relationship, now entirely driven by business concerns.

Yesterday's official British gushing about Mr Zhu side-stepped the fact that the slaughter of pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square nine years ago remains a central and unresolved historical fact in modern China.

The event at the Royal Institute yesterday marked a joint collaboration between groups that described themselves as jointly representing "the unrepresented peoples of Asia". These included the Free Tibet Campaign, the Burma Action Group, the Tapol human-rights campaign on Indonesia, and the British Coalition for East Timor. The group is organising a march tomorrow through central London, from Jubilee Gardens to Trafalgar Square.



Calling card: Demonstrators, calling for the Chinese to withdraw from Tibet, protesting at Downing Street yesterday as the Chinese Prime Minister, Zhu Rongji, met Tony Blair
Photograph: Reuters

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Britain praises Zhu the moderniser

By Rupert Cornwell

BRITAIN and the European Union yesterday hailed the start of a new era of relations with China, built on intensified economic co-operation and where - plainly - Peking's much criticised human rights record will deliberately occupy a far less contentious part of the agenda.

After a Downing Street meeting between the Prime Minister and his Chinese opposite number, Zhu Rongji - the first Chinese premier to come to London since 1985 - Tony Blair's spokesman made clear that Mr Zhu, the architect of a sweeping economic reform programme, was already a fully paid-up member of the "modernisers' club".

However much he detests the term, Mr Zhu is already identified as the "Chinese Gorbachev" - a reference to the Soviet leader who took Britain by storm in his visit of December 1984.

Mr Blair apparently had been "fascinated" and "full of admiration" for the ambition of Mr Zhu's plans. An EU spokeswoman described the atmosphere at the first EU-China

summit which followed as "really changed, with a really constructive feel".

As both sides intend it, the wary circling of the past will be no more. Most important, the EU underlined its support for China's entry into the World Trade Organisation, crucial to the integration of what is by one measure the world's second largest economy into the global system.

As expected, Royal & Sun Alliance has been given the go-ahead to operate in China's insurance market. Mr Zhu also indicated that other UK insurance companies would follow. He also signalled an early expansion of British air services into China, while the country's central bank will send officials for training at the Bank of England. Ultimately the goal is for "the best" Chinese companies to be quoted on the London Stock Exchange.

Predictably human rights got barely a look in. Tibet did come up, Mr Blair's spokesman said, and the Prime Minister expressed concern over various individual cases. But the mood was "positive, different from what it has been in the past."

Asia shows its displeasure with Europe

By Richard Lloyd Parry in Tokyo

IN a country where it is still customary to apologise after someone treads on your foot, ranting is not a highly developed art. Japan's bureaucrats are masters of the veiled utterance and indirect criticism. The strongest word in the diplomatic vocabulary is "regrettable".

So it is a measure of how grumpy she must have felt that a Japanese diplomat, in her official capacity, recently had this to say about Europe's response to the Asian economic crisis: "European countries have been free-riders on Asia's economic success, but unwilling to share responsibility for helping it out."

Asia's ill humour will be on show in London this week at the second Asia-Europe Meeting (Asem 2). Tony Blair is hosting two days of talks among 10 Asian leaders and the 15 heads of the European Union, plus Jacques Santer of the European Commission. They will discuss the battle against drugs, money laundering and child prostitution, but the central subject will be the Asian economic crisis.

Asia says Europe has done less than any other region of the developed world to remedy the problem of the currency contagion which laid low half of South-East Asia. Of sums promised to the International Monetary Fund to bail out Thailand, South Korea and Indonesia, Japan has promised \$19bn (£11.66bn) and the US \$8bn. The EU has stumped up \$6.2bn. "Europe should contribute more in efforts to deal with the problem," said an Indonesian diplomat.

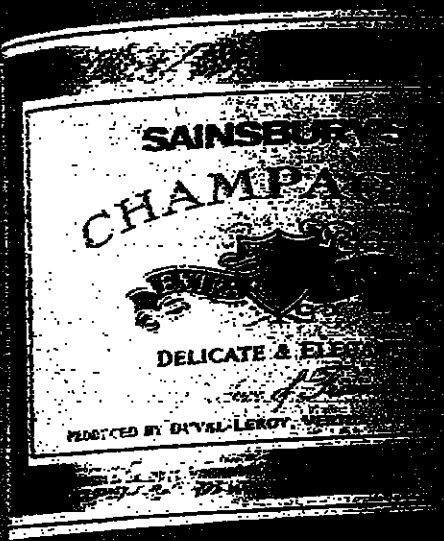
The Europeans dispute this,

pointing to contributions individual union members make in subscriptions to the IMF. None the less, there are initiatives to be unveiled at Asem 2 which, it is hoped, will deflect such criticism. Britain's idea is for a trust fund, administered by the World Bank, which would dispatch experts to help out troubled economies. Its value would be £5m, tiny compared with the billions being dispensed by the IMF.

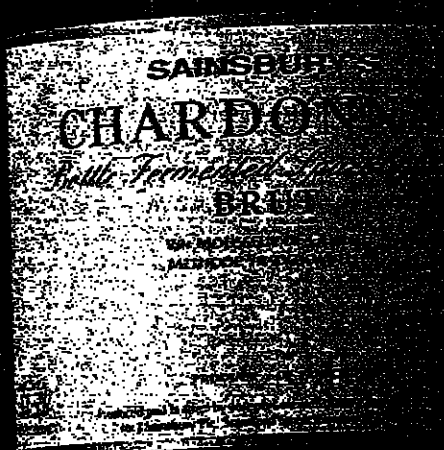
Two years ago, when the first Asem meeting took place, in Bangkok, both sides had their reasons for wanting it to work. If world trade is seen as a triangle, with the US, Europe and Asia as its points, the lines linking the last two are by far the weakest. The Asians were keen to develop the relationship. And the Europeans wanted to catch up with the US in the scramble for a share of the Asian economic "miracle" - a phrase unlikely to be heard at Asem 2.

A big question hangs over European banks which lent freely in South Korea and Indonesia and stand to lose their loans if those economies go further down the drain. European manufacturers are threatened by the plunge in Asia's currencies which will make its exports irresistibly cheap. The EU's approach will be to insist once again that the IMF supervise Asia's recovery, but there is no sign that European leaders will take any big initiative. Saving Asia is costly, complicated and diplomatically tricky, and there are few votes in it back home. However grumpy his guests, Mr Blair can be seen knowing that they need him far more than he needs them.

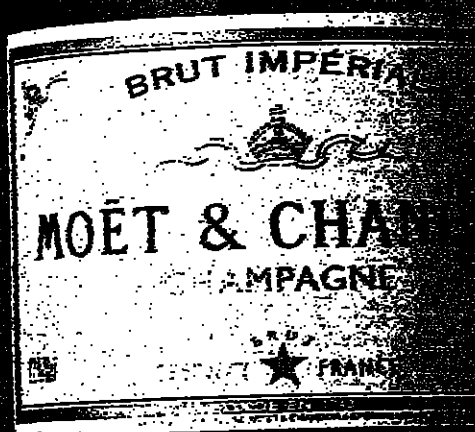
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Kosovo: fear and loathing under the gun

Steve Crawshaw reports on
a war waiting to explode.
Photographs by David Rose

THE desolate, Serb-ruled province of Kosovo is a place of malign surrealism at every turn. The strangenesses are peculiar enough. But even more disturbing is that lunacy eventually becomes a form of normality.

Albanians form a 90 per cent majority here. And yet, Albanian children are banned from receiving ordinary education. Schools are reserved for the Serbs. Albanian children must crowd into private houses, taking their education in shifts from 7am to 7pm.

The pupils are crammed in, sometimes five to a desk; computer science in one room, physics in another, English in the living room downstairs. Pupils and teachers alike have come to take this extraordinary apartheid, first introduced by Slobodan Milosevic eight years ago, for granted. As in the old South Africa, a tiny minority rules over the huge majority. As in South Africa under apartheid, both sides are frightened of the other: the Albanian majority is frightened of the brute force of the Serb minority, which controls the army and the police; the Serb minority is frightened that the Albanians will one day wreak terrible revenge.

Already, neither side can imagine meeting across the divide. Albanian and Serb children sometimes play in a single playground – but always at different ends. “We never play or talk. Sometimes, we fight,” says an eight-year-old Albanian child. Because? “Serbs are our enemy.” A Serb child would give just the same answer.

Nationalism in Kosovo helped propel Milosevic to power 10 years ago. Many expected that Kosovo would be the first place in Yugoslavia to explode. In reality, an Albanian policy of non-violent resistance has meant that other wars came first. Now, however, it may be Kosovo's turn.

There are isolated signs of hope. Renewed Albanian access to schools and universities has just been half-agreed, for the first time in eight years. Meanwhile, however, Serb forces have killed more than 100 Albanians in recent weeks. Both sides believe that things can only get worse.

As you pass through the armed checkpoints across the province, you meet Albanian families on the move – on tractors, on carts, on foot. They flee destroyed villages, and the further violence that they fear is on the way. The EU has muttered vaguely, more in the hope that the problem will go away than with a determination to ensure a just solution. Even more than in Croatia and Bosnia, the world seems determined to look the other way.

Most Serbs and Albanians now regard war as inevitable. Serbs believe this to be their ancient “heartland”; Albanians, stripped of even the most basic rights, have begun an armed rebellion against the “occupiers”. The destroyed houses in the Albanian hamlet of Prekaz, and the long lines of hastily dug graves in an open field, are likely to be only the first of many.

The headmaster at an unofficial Albanian school still hopes that international pressure will force the Serbs to compromise. But he admits there is little prospect. “If there's no solution to the Kosovo problem now – of course there'll be a war.” Neville Chamberlain's comment on Czechoslovakia 60 years ago remains as valid for Kosovo today: it is in a far-off country, of which we know little.



Top: An Albanian family on the move after their village came under attack from Serb forces the previous day.

Above left: Refugees from the Drenica area, after Serb attacks.

Above right: An Albanian classroom in Pristina.

Below left: Daily life continues for those who live off the land. A family sows seeds.

Below right: The graves of Prekaz villagers, hurriedly dug by Serb forces.



By Zeus, are you ready for the golden boy – Ganymede Redux?



JOHN
LYTTLE

ASK yourselves: are you really ready for the return of Ganymede? For those a trifle light in the Greek scholarship, allow me: Ganymede was the androgynous cutie Zeus fell head over thunderbolt for, and kidnapped – emphasis on the kid – to be his... “cup-bearer”. (Which is one way of putting it.) Beautiful as opposed to buxom, willowy as opposed to muscled, and with not much to say for himself – Ovid reports that Ganymede's lips moved when other people were reading – Ganymede was the first of the Twinkies, bless him.

In gaudy paintings and purple-ink poems he would flash his libido-confusing wares through-out the Renaissance and later

provide a touch-me-up template for English drama – all those “Master Betty's” dressing as dainty girls and vice-versa – coming into his own (and coming out) in *Edward II*.

On and on he went, a secret cult and open cultural emblem, his tale – half myth, half rent-boy sob story – updated and retold in Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* as both a reckless romance and cautionary fable. Here Ganymede is retitled Tadzio and is transformed into a honey of a honey blond with a tight sailor suit and revolving head. The boy can't help it: his vacant, doe-eyed availability gets gay guys hot and gets straight guys hot and extremely blithered.

Here our Ant and Dec combined makes one unprepared heterosexual expire from longing. Zeus was a God without guilt but times had turned Judaic-Christian, even as the object of desire flirtatiously endured. Right into the Sixties in fact, though now relegated from Mount Olympus and high literature to queer port: pouting, passive femme to some hairy, nominally heterosexual truck driver's less than articulated lust.

Then – pouf! – the golden boy disappeared from the margins. Alright: not really, he found himself, after centuries, out of fashion.

Except – who would have imagined? – Ganymede has

staged a comeback. The itchy rash of gangly cum graceful boy bands should have been a tip-off from the zeitgeist sensitive; likewise the halfway house and mixed message that was and is Marky Mark (cutest little baby face stuck on the body of a bullock) – but who could have predicted the male Lolita would pop up en masse and everywhere? Cruise any dance floor for suddenly skinny torsos: check the fawns winning this year's Mr Gay UK heats; ponder the popularity of G.A.Y.'s Monday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday nursery romps – is this disco or battery farming? – and consider the overthrow of abundantly hung port superstar Jeff Stryker for the crypto-pubescent Johan and

all those other *mineleuropa* mail-order starlets who bring new meaning to the phrase “The Czech is in the post”.

So, why? And why now? It's written on the body (in this case, in crayon). Trace the Nineties linear descent – or ascent – from pumped-up to buff to lissom. As gay men gain further ground, they are occupying less space. This could be called confidence: a retreat which is actually an advance. In appearance Ganymede Redux is fresh and (apparently) unformed by experience, no matter his age, which might be as advanced as 35 or more. (Ganymede's home gives good lighting.) We are, after all, discussing we who pioneered “middle youth”. What

we're not discussing is fossilised stereotype. Fresh and unformed makes an askew sense in a period determined to believe that Aids is over and an equal age of consent within sight. A new beginning – 16 – and the millennium – 2000 – conceivably merits a blank look. Besides, the old games no longer amuse. A fruit with a flat top and a six-pack stomach just doesn't bug rugby players the way he used to – hell, he probably is a rugby player – while a boundary-blurring lovely can still get even the dullest chap sweaty in ways that will leave him sleepless.

Funny peculiar: Ganymede promising latitude, if not liberation. The Boy Done Good. For Narcissus. He might, however,

mean something vastly different for Normals, who are quietly one could even say covertly – being invited to role model their increasing redundant selves on that darling petal Leonardo. DeCaprio. De-fanged, de-clawed, ripe and rosy-cheeked, both sets – Leonardo is the husky girl's familiar and pet. Of course he's idol worshipped. What else is he good for? In a future that can no longer guarantee the alpha-male gainful employment and sees yesterday's juvenile leads increasingly fetching up in jail, boys had better stick to the Slim-Fast diet and make the most of being an accessory after some very stark facts. A thing of beauty may not be a boy forever, but by Zeus, he had better bloody try.

A television
is for life,
not just for
Christmas

INSOMNIA, depression, obesity, illiteracy and profligate spending – these are the damaging effects of watching television according to TV-Free America, the pressure group behind National TV Turnoff Week, which is scheduled to take place here this month. Grave consequences indeed, but surely a small price to pay when faced with the alternative: a world without television.

And what a nightmare vision that is. Imagine the scene: you arrive home from work, pour yourself a stiff drink, slump exhausted on to the sofa, look wearily in the direction of the far corner of the room... and there's nothing there! Your box of delights has disappeared. So what on earth are you supposed to do?

I suppose for a little while you might just sit there and twiddle your thumbs, perhaps gazing around the room in a slightly bemused kind of way. But that could get quite boring quite quickly, so what next? The obvious thing to do would be to talk to your partner, who's probably sitting next to you, twiddling his or her thumbs and gazing around the room in a slightly bemused kind of way.

But what to talk about? Clearly the disappearance of your television set would be high on the agenda. After that, things get a little more sticky. Normally, conversation of the "guess what happened at the office today" variety takes place during commercial breaks or the longueurs which crop up as a matter of course during, say, *Classic Trains*, *Ainsley's Meals In Minutes* or indeed just about every programme on Channel 5. By its very nature, such conversation is abbreviated and is accorded the scant attention it deserves.

The obvious alternative would therefore seem to be to emulate the days before television existed. That was when families gathered around the piano and had a good old sing-song. Admittedly you may well not have a piano, but you could always get one. And then you could have piano lessons, which might take several weeks. But even after all that, another problem arises. What songs do you sing? This is the Nineties, after all, and

TIM HULSE

contemporary trends in music don't really give much scope for domestic performance. Is it even worth attempting, for instance, a homely rendition of 'Firestarter' by The Prodigy? Probably not.

So it looks like a game of cards could be in order, or perhaps it's time to dust off that Monopoly board. And what fantastic fun that will be as the male competitive streak rears its ugly head with the inevitable result that one of you ends up going directly to the spare room and you can forget all about passing Go for some time.

Did someone mention books? I think one of the ideas behind these TV Turnoff weeks is that we'll all read books instead of watching television and become cultured and well-balanced individuals. But who has the energy to read a book after a day's work? If we all came home, sat down and opened a book, the entire nation would be comatose by 8pm. Just think of the defence implications.

But it isn't just at home that a lack of TV could blight your life. There's the office to consider. What on earth will you find to talk about, considering that the staple topic of conversation each morning is the previous evening's big match or the latest developments in *Coronation Street*/*EastEnders*/*Brookside*? Are you to entertain your colleagues with a blow-by-blow account of your latest whist drive?

And on a less selfish note, there are others to think of. If television no longer existed, what would become of all those dysfunctional show-offs who make their living appearing on it? Two words especially come to mind here: Ant and Dec.

Ant and Dec. What would be the career implications for her? It scarcely bears thinking about. There can't be too many potential employers out there who value the ability to speak and smile at the same time at the expense of all others. (Insert your own Tony Blair joke here if you must.)

But perhaps Ant and Dec and the rest of us needn't start worrying just yet. As a welcome counter to the anti-TV types, the latest edition of *New Scientist* brings news of an experiment which showed that battery chickens exposed to television grew quicker on less food, laid larger eggs more regularly and appeared to be happier than their television-deprived cousins.

And that was after watching it for just half an hour a day. And presumably without any American do-gooders rattling their cages.



Ship-shape: Captain Mike Moulin stands proudly before the Grand Princess which will be the world's largest cruise ship when it is launched in Southampton in May

Catching cabin fever

In the wake of 'Titanic' cruises are more popular than ever. Louise Jury steps aboard the Grand Princess; the biggest holiday liner in the world

CRASHING chandeliers, flooded cabins and freezing waters: you'd think the final scenes of the Oscar-winning movie, *Titanic*, showing in terrifying, water-gushing excess the final moments of the world's most famous liner, would be enough to deter any would-be boat passenger. Instead there's a boom in the number of holidaymakers booking cruises.

The film's popularity has added momentum to an already marked increase in people wanting to take a cruise. The number of Britons ocean cruising has doubled since 1993 and grown by more than 20 per cent every year for the last five years. Last year more than half a million Britons took a sea cruise, joining 5 million Americans, and the numbers are expected to rise to 900,000 by 2000. Cruising is the fastest growing sector of the British travel industry.

Those figures make men like Captain Mike Moulin very happy indeed. His new ship, the Grand Princess, will be the world's largest cruise ship when she is launched from Southampton in May. She is about the same length as the *Titanic*

at 951 feet and has designs on being as grand. But the comparison ends there. She is taller – more than 200 feet – and bigger – at 109,000 tons. Most significantly, Captain Moulin is adamant she is safer.

"If you ask would I feel more comfortable in a smaller ship the answer is no. She's way ahead on navigation," he says. "The power management and safety management are about as far ahead as you can go. I think we've gone for overkill." And indeed they have. For the passenger wanting the holiday of a lifetime, there is a different bar – including one dedicated to caviar – for every day of a two-week trip. If they fancy a swirl in a Jacuzzi, they can pick from one of nine, and when bored with that, they can enjoy a virtual reality game as part of the hi-tech entertainment on board.

It's that sort of variety and the sense of luxury which makes cruising so appealing to people. The cruise companies want to retain some sense of exclusivity too, despite the rising numbers of people

taking these holidays, so they find other means to emphasise it: cruise lines are buying their own private beaches for passengers to visit and even whole islands on the strength of the interest. And the kind of people who go on cruises is changing as well. Although the increasing numbers of retired people are contributing to the success, the average age of travellers is dropping. It is now 54.

This popularity means that the Grand Princess is sold out for her maiden voyage, and the whole of

the maiden season to the Mediterranean has been snapped up. It is a pattern echoed across the industry. Bill Gibbons, director of the Passenger Shipping Association, the umbrella organisation for the cruise lines, says the comparative strength of the economy means there is a "lot of disposable income floating around looking for a home".

"We certainly expect we'll see more than 600,000 ocean cruise passengers this year," he says.

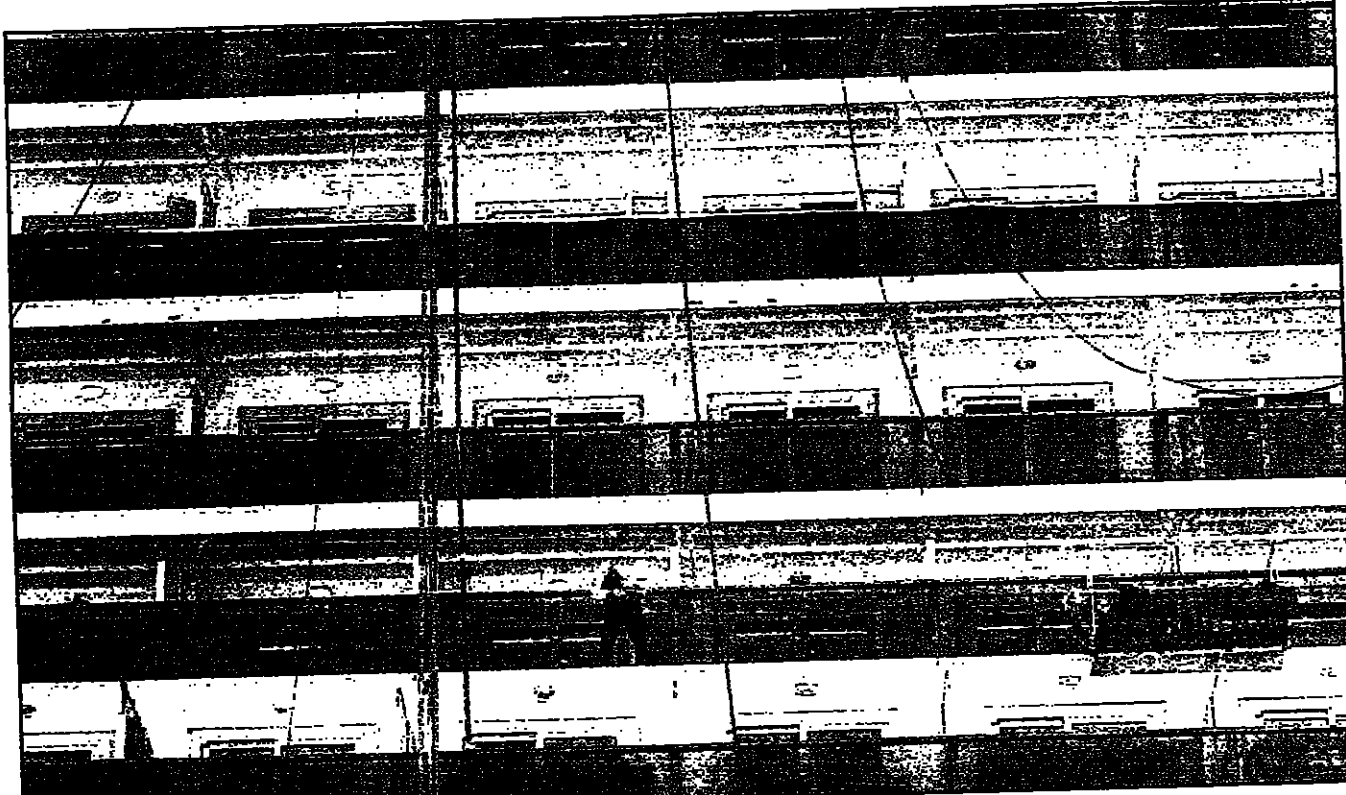
As well as the *Grand Princess*, P&O's \$2.5 billion (£1.5

billion) investment programme includes seven new ships, with two already launched. Carnival Cruise Lines is launching *Elation* and *Paradise* this year and Disney Cruise Line will unveil its first ships, *Disney Magic* and *Disney Wonder*. Each of these will carry more than 2,000 people. The Norwegian Cruise Line added two new ships, *Norwegian Majesty* and *Norwegian Dynasty*, to its fleet last year, with 800 and 1,000 berths apiece. But it is not only the giant ships, with their economies of scale, which are prospering. Bill Spiers, of the Cunard Line, which prides itself on greater exclusivity, says its much smaller ships are "performing very strongly" too.

"The enormous ships present a very different cruise experience from what we offer. Three thousand people descending on a tiny Caribbean island creates challenges," he says. "We're in the luxury business."

His five-strong fleet includes the *QEII*, where a three-month cruise might cost £300,000, and two super yachts, the *Sea Goddess I* and *II*, which have a maximum of 116 guests paying around £2,000 a person a week. They are the highest rated cruise ships in Berlitz's guide to cruising and the captain doesn't ask you to his table – he dines with you only if you ask. "They're very small and able to get to inaccessible places," Mr Spiers says.

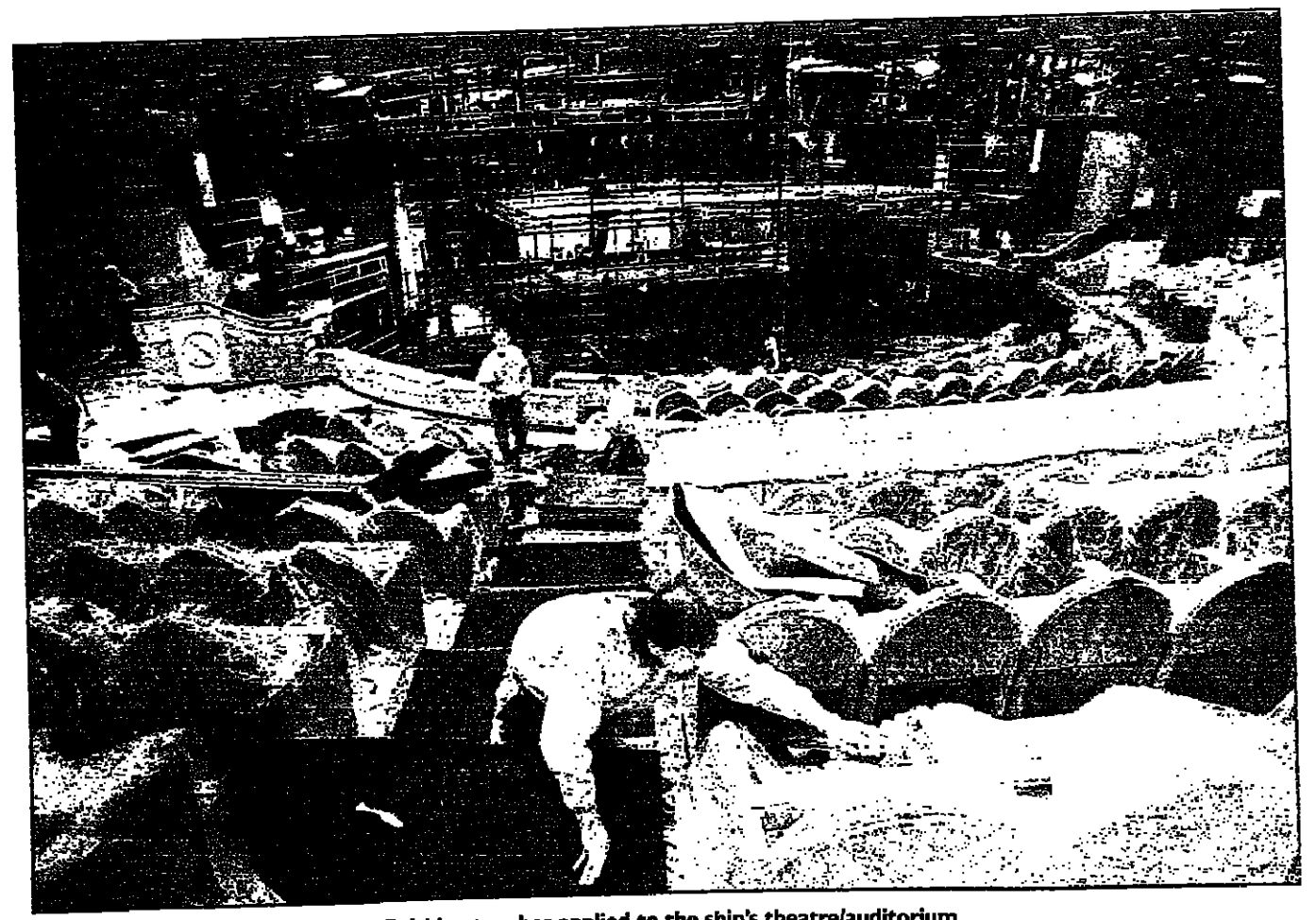
Captain Moulin has an encouraging thought for those nervous at the thought of watery disaster. The *Titanic* probably would never have sunk if they hadn't attempted to avoid the iceberg, thereby gashing her along the side. "Ships are designed to take an impact full-on," he says. It's what the bow is for.



Hanging out: The Grand Princess boasts more balconies than any other cruise ship



Rock 'n' roll: The Grand Princess boasts a bizarre-looking 'disco-pod' at its stern, which can be entered by escalator



Lost in space: Workmen apply the finishing touches applied to the ship's theatre/auditorium

Photographs by John Voos

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Japan in crisis? — Don't panic

WHEN THE chairman of Sony says "the Japanese economy is on the verge of collapsing", it is time to sit up and take notice. Especially when he adds a warning that this could "trigger a worldwide recession". To be blunt, even the news that the Japanese economy is going belly-up will hardly cause most people in this country to look up from their Fujitsu computer screens.

But when the man who makes Walkmans compares the inaction of the Japanese government to that of the American in the face of the 1929 depression, then we feel the stirrings of unease. Anyone with a moderate interest in current affairs will be dimly aware that the Japanese economic miracle has been in a spot of trouble for some time. It is ominous that prices have actually been falling in Japan, a sinking feeling not experienced in the West since the Thirties.

The casual student of world affairs is also likely to know that the so-called Asian tiger economies of Korea, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia have rather abruptly ceased to function as role models for the brave new world of dynamic capitalism. We may not have at our fingertips statistics such as the fact that east Asia has contributed three-fifths of world growth since 1990, but any intelligent observer can speculate that an Asian collapse taking down Japan as well as the "tigers" could drag down the rest of the world.

So is there cause for fear?

The first point to understand is that Sony is engaged in lobbying the Japanese Prime Minister, who arrived in London yesterday for an Asian-European summit. Here, he will come under renewed pressure to do two things: to reflate the Japanese economy and to reduce further the trade barriers that surround the Japanese market. Both courses of action are strongly supported by Japanese business leaders, disdainful of the narrow domestic outlook of Japanese politicians.

The second point is that, however deep and prolonged the Japanese recession might be, we should remember that it is a very rich country with a skilled and disciplined workforce.

Nor should a big downturn in the Far East — if that is what it turns out to be — necessarily harm Europe and America. We are so used now to the rhetoric of the globalised economy that our future as an open, trading nation might seem more vulnerable than ever to the backwash of global economic tides. But in fact the greater complexity of the world's trading system offers automatic protection against Thirties-style deflation. The response to the holling of the unsinkable Japanese economy is not, then, to scurry for the lifeboats, but to endorse Mr Ohga's plea for refutation and reform.

There is not much we in Britain can do to reflate the Japanese economy — we are already doing what we can by keeping the pound high and buying expensive four-wheel-drives by the shipload.

But we are well placed to offer advice on how to reform Japan's financial institutions, because we have been there ourselves. Back in the 1950s, when Sergeant Bilko found the idea of a radio that was "Made in Japan" hilariously funny, Britain suffered a similar problem to Japan's today. We were stuck in our ways, a set of ways which had been successful — which had indeed ruled much of the world — but which had ceased to work.

Now Japan has found that its manufacturing techniques can be replicated elsewhere, while its conformist education system does not produce the creative skills likely to succeed in the next wave of the global economy. It is notable that while Japan excelled at making hardware, it has fallen behind Bill Gates and British programmers when it comes to software.

Meanwhile, the closed nature of the Japanese financial system means that the Japanese economy cannot easily draw on the resources of international capital markets. In the Eighties, British financial institutions were opened to the world and the attitudes of managers and workforces transformed. Japan's financiers had their "big bang" this week, but they still have a way to go to achieve open, transparent markets.

Already there is an intellectual acceptance of the need for change in Japan, but it needs political leadership to make it happen. So it is right that Mr Ohga should put pressure on the Prime Minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto, to accelerate reform.

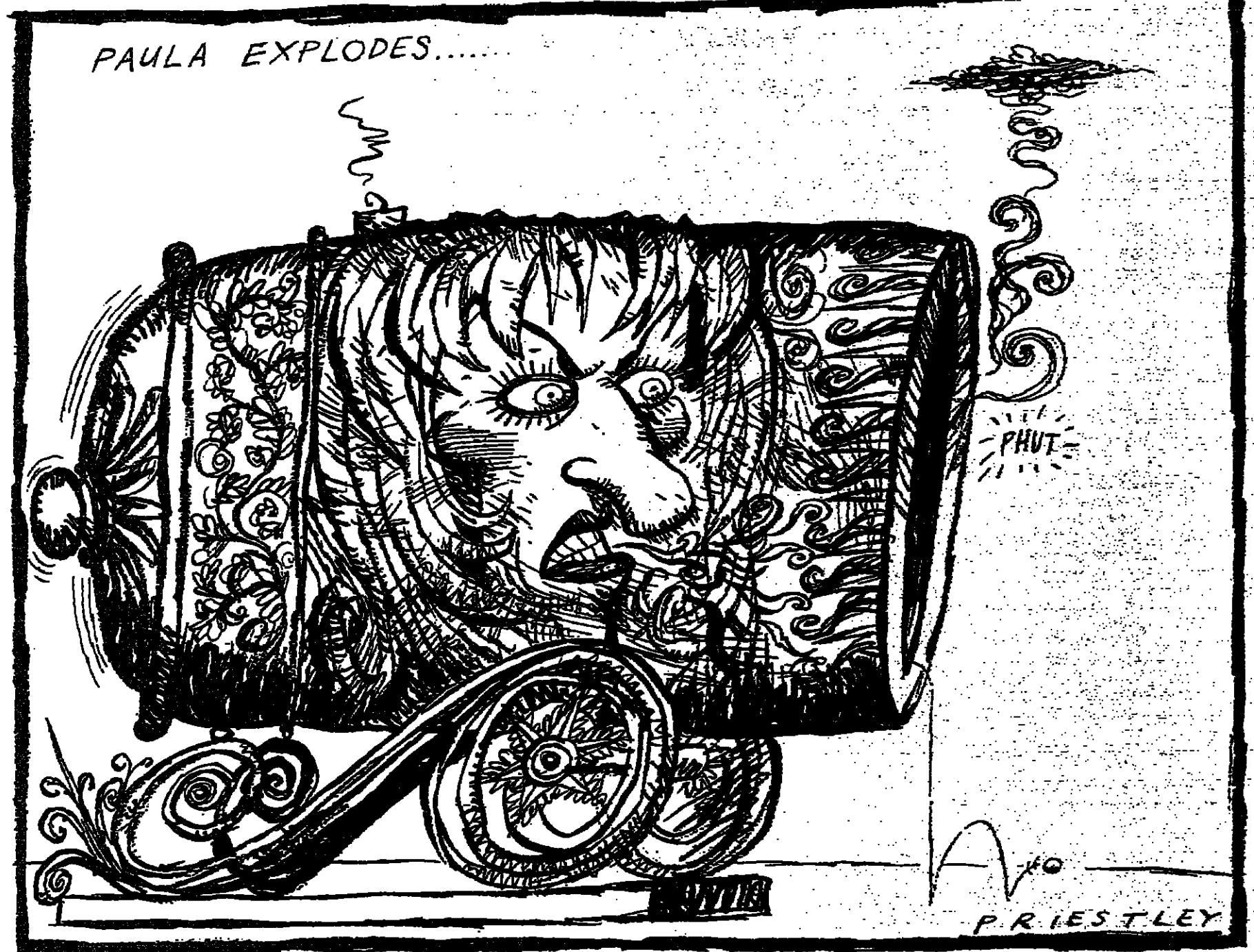
It is important to us, too, in the long run, that Japan should succeed. If Mr Hashimoto and his successors can get this right, then Japan will be one of the leading powers in the world in the 21st century. If they do not, that role might pass to China. Imperfect as Japan's liberal democracy might be, it is infinitely preferable as a global power to China's totalitarianism.

Face the future

A SMALL pioneer force of men are using laser technology to abolish shaving for ever. Is the end of the beard nigh? History suggests otherwise.

Some of the proudest episodes of our island story have been accompanied by facial fecundity — think of the Elizabethans (smart, pointy) and the Victorians (lush, extensive). But the 20th Century has seen an onslaught of anti-beard technology (the safety and electric razors). But the decline of facial hair has been halting, and never complete. By the First World War the "full set" had given way to the moustache (Kitchener and Haig). The 1920s saw the beard confined to a few intellectuals (the likes of D.H. Lawrence). The Second World War saw a further decline, with the exception of the RAF's heroic handbears. The post-war period saw the credibility of the moustache undermined when it was adopted by the "spiv". The 1950s were a low bristle mark until the Angry Young Men adopted neat beards to go with their duffle coats and pipes.

By the time the musical *Hair!* appeared in 1968 face fuzz had entered an avant-garde phase that saw the triumph of neo-Gothic sideburns (Noddy Holder and Dr Rhodes Boyson) and luxuriant moustaches (Jason King or Private Eye's Dave Sparr). The 1980s saw things trimmed back (though not for guys) but recent years have seen a surge in popularity of the goatee. Beards are facial fashion. Like all fashion they live in cycles. One day these laser-trimmed guinea-pigs may regret losing their follicles.



Errant clergy

CLARE GARNER ("The priests who fell to Earth", 30 March) raises important issues, most particularly the Catholic Church's continual denial of vicarious liability with regard to errant priest behaviour.

There is an absence of clear judicial precedent in the relationship between church and priest. The Church insists, that the priest is not an employee. However, it is arguable that a monk is acting under the direction of the abbot, or the priest under the bishop, which may at law give rise to vicarious responsibility.

For people on legal aid, this refusal to acknowledge responsibility can be disastrous. When the Church gets struck out as second defendant, the priest's legal representatives immediately inform you that the priest (the first defendant) cannot meet a judgment on the grounds of having no money. The victim is then obliged to inform the Legal Aid Board and risk having her legal aid certificate discharged. This effectively brings the case to a close. The opportunity to identify a problem priest is missed and the public remain at risk.

It is common ground that the priest is only in post by virtue of his appointment by the bishop, or the monk by the abbot. The Church selects, trains, ordains, appoints, authorises to counsel and reappoints. It has, in all respects, a disciplinary function over a priest and control over his welfare.

This imposes on the Church a fiduciary duty to monitor and supervise in order to prevent harm occurring. However, when protection and cover-ups are not successful, it would seem, the Church is protected by a legal system which still does not hold it responsible.

Perhaps it is time for it to rethink before judgments such as the £73m against the Catholic Church in Texas travel across the Atlantic.

MARY EDWARDS
London W11

CLARE GARNER'S article asks "how much longer the Catholic Church can avoid facing up to the reality" of sex abuse. She seems to be a bit out of date.

AM I alone in feeling mystified by the growing reaction against a strong pound? For decades its fall was a cause of shame and we eyed the mighty dollar or the impenetrable

way to find out and that was to sneak a look at his obituary in the newspaper offices where he worked. He was an habitué of several obituary offices, and thought he would be able to get access to forthcoming death notices, and see what had been written about him; in which he was wrong, because security is very tight in these places, on the principle that nobody must ever know what is being written about him before he dies.

A reader writes: Of course, Martin Trapp may have been unable to find his obituary because they hadn't written one about him. Maybe they didn't think he was worth obituaries.

Quite possible, but that wouldn't have occurred to Martin Trapp. Everyone who is in the habit of reading and writing obituaries believes deep down that he too is worth having an obituary written of him.

A reader inquires: So he faked his own death? Well, he thought about it. He toyed with the idea of faking his own disappearance...

LETTERS

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number
Fax 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

In 1994 the Catholic Church was the first church in England and Wales to issue public guidelines on dealing with accusations of child sexual abuse made against clergy. It specifically forbade evasive actions, and guaranteed co-operation by the Church with statutory authorities in the interests of putting the safety of children first and detecting offenders. Two years later, it published a guide to helping victims and survivors. At present it has a working party on what to do with offenders after they are released from prison, so as best to protect children in the future.

Whatever one thinks about celibacy as a rule for clergy, it is clear that child sex abuse takes place in residential care, in families, and among other clergy, where the rule of celibacy does not prevail.

For a priest to form a sexual relationship with an adult in a counselling situation is abusive. This sort of abuse needs to be met both by penalties, because it is wrong and by removing opportunities of a repeat. With sufficient assessment, supervision, and proof of amendment, a priest may be dealt with in ways other than dismissal from ministry. Unlike child sex abuse such a relationship is not a criminal offence, nor necessarily evidence of obsessive, compulsive sexual behaviour.

I know of no seminary in England and Wales where celibacy and sexuality are not discussed when a person is being considered for suitability for the priesthood.

NICHOLAS COOTE
Assistant General Secretary
Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales
London SW1

Out of school
YOU REPORT that the National Association of Head Teachers is calling for legislation to outlaw parents from taking cheap term-time holidays ("Headteachers attack parents over truancy", 25 March).

Unfortunately, for many lone-parent families, and others on low incomes, this will mean outlawing holidays altogether. According to recent research ("Small Fortunes: Spending on Children in Lone Parent Families", Middleton and Ashworth) lone parents manage to maintain spending on many essential household budget items by spending 40 per cent less on holidays on average than two-parent families. Special arrangements made with travel and holiday firms tend to specify that the holidays should be taken at non-peak times — outside usual school holidays.

Holidays are a vital part of a child's life. They contribute to their

wellbeing and enable them to experience some variety in their surroundings and activities. They can hardly be put into the same category as truancy or a lax attitude to education.

MARGARET CREEAR
Policy Officer
Gingerbread
London EC1

YOU REPORT (31 March) that 137,000 pupils a year are "banned from schools". What has not been acknowledged is that children looked after by local authorities have been disproportionately affected by the recent explosion in school exclusions as schools compete in examination league tables.

Twenty-five per cent of youngsters aged 14-16 in public care are either excluded or not attending school regularly. As a stable home environment is considered key to educational achievement, it is not surprising that children who have suffered the disruption involved in family breakdown are over-represented in exclusion statistics. Those who have suffered abuse or neglect are particularly likely to find difficulty conforming to the demands of a school environment.

Since most children in public care are placed in foster care, the exclusion explosion has also greatly increased pressures on foster carers, who have to make alternative arrangements for children in their care who are temporarily or permanently excluded.

For the Social Exclusion Unit, seeking target groups to benefit from special government interventions, there can be few more disadvantaged and deserving cases than children in public care who are excluded from school.

PAT VERITY
Policy and Service Manager
National Foster Care Association
London SE1

Titanic and stunning

ALTHOUGH the take on *Titanic* was quite witty, it is insensitive and bitchy to keep talking about Kate Winslet's weight (Eye, 27 March). She is within perfectly normal parameters for a person of her build, and she looked stunning at the Oscars.

It is hypocritical of the press to keep on saying that the super-models make my generation diet and get eating disorders, then go on to say that Kate Winslet is too fat. What kind of example is it going to set to us? We have enough troubles as it is without people like you making us worry about our weight. The film critics are just feeling sorry for themselves because Kate Winslet didn't win an Oscar.

LIZZIE WILLIAMS
Aged 15
Swindon,
Wiltshire

Struck dumb

I CAN'T believe that 30 of Fleet Street's finest were reduced to silence by Alastair Campbell's assertion that no one could accuse him of lying over the Blair-Prodi telephone call (report, 1 April). Might one not have ventured something on the lines of: "But, please sir, is it remotely conceivable that you might just slightly have not told us everything you knew? Nothing personal, of course?"

SEBASTIAN SCOTNEY
Richmond,
Surrey

No joke

A THIRTY-FOOT statue of Peter Mandelson, prison officers apparently under serious investigation for convict abuse; and a woman who claims she actually consented to having sex with Bill Clinton: don't you think three April Fool spoofs a little excessive for one year? Glad to hear the Labour Party's finally seeing sense on the House of Lords though.

CHARLIE ROSE
Bristol



MILES KINGSTON

YESTERDAY I began telling you the story of Martin Trapp, an expert in the history of American showbiz, who was kept fully employed writing obituaries of, and tributes to, the aged survivors of the golden age of American showbiz. Indeed, his obituaries were so well thought of that he was induced to publish a book composed entirely of the death notices he had written of other people, which sounds ghastly but is no more so than any biographical encyclopaedia, which after all is no more than a collection of glorified obituaries...

A reader writes: Just spare us the catchpenny philosophy and get on with the story! Yesterday you said that Martin Trapp was going to die in this episode.

That is not quite what I said. What I said was that Martin Trapp became so obsessed with obituaries that he conceived a desire to know what people would say about him after he died. Now, there was one easy

way to find out and that was to sneak a look at his obituary in the newspaper offices where he worked. He was an habitué of several obituary offices, and thought he would be able to get access to forthcoming death notices, and see what had been written about him; in which he was wrong, because security is very tight in these places, on the principle that nobody must ever know what is being written about him before he dies.

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A reader inquires: So he faked his own death? Well, he thought about it. He toyed with the idea of faking his own disappearance...

A reader asks: Would that have been enough? To disappear? I mean, Lord Lucan disappeared pretty comprehensively, but I have never seen his obituary anywhere.

That was probably because Lord Lucan was a feckless layabout who never did anything interesting or worthwhile. The only thing that Lord Lucan did of note in his life was the very last thing he did which was to disappear before he could be arrested after he had murdered his nanny... No, Martin Trapp decided to fake his own suicide, but before he could decide on a method of suicide which would suggest his death without actually involving a corpse, the matter was taken out of his hands. He was due to fly on a plane to Edinburgh. He missed the flight. The plane crashed. Nobody knew he was not on it. All his friends assumed he had caught the flight, and the airline also assumed that he was on the passenger list. Nobody survived the crash. Ergo, Martin Trapp was dead.

Well, Martin Trapp delayed the announcement of his survival long enough to buy the next day's papers, and sure enough there were several long pieces on him. They paid tribute to his encyclopaedic knowledge of showbiz history, which pleased him, but there were other things which pleased him less well. He was accused by several of his rivals of shameless plagiarism and unoriginality. His private life was raked over (Martin had been married once, and had then come out as gay, and some of the details made racy reading) and the smell that was left behind by these obituaries was scandalous and sulphurous rather than saintly.

A reader writes: He should have sued them for libel.

And that is exactly what he did! He came back to life and sued the lot of them for libel. He took the view that he was bound to win, and that even if he didn't get substantial damages, he would make history by being the first per-

son to sue an obituary for libel. You cannot libel the dead, you see, but if the dead come back to life, then it's rather different. Now, normally the defence in a libel case is either that the libel is true or fair comment, but in this case all the obituaries pleaded that Martin Trapp was deemed dead at the time and therefore was *de jure* if not *de facto* dead, and therefore they were justified in being as frank as an obituary would allow, because it was up to Martin Trapp to reveal that he was alive, which he had failed to do.

A reader writes: And what was the outcome? Lord Lucan writes: I must warn you, Mr Kingston, that I fully intend to sue you for libel for saying earlier on that I was a layabout and murderer and that I never did anything worthwhile in my life.

A solicitor writes: I would advise you, Mr Kingston, to say no more on this matter and end the article right here.

Miles Kingston writes: Rightly so.

No time to despair – where there's talk there's hope



DONALD
MACINTYRE

CUTTING A DEAL IN NORTHERN IRELAND

THE omens could hardly look worse. The Gardaí find a massive 1,000lb republican bomb in a white BMW waiting to board the Dun Laoghaire ferry for Holyhead. A few hours earlier, a tight-lipped Bertie Ahern, the Irish Taoiseach, has left Downing Street after three-and-a-half hours of talks which conspicuously fail to resolve some of the deep disagreements between the two governments over the future of Northern Ireland. Surely only an insane optimist could now think there is a chance of a resolution? And all this when negotiations for a comprehensive settlement have less than a week to go before their deadline.

Perhaps the formal negotiating positions of Unionists and nationalists are still far apart on many key issues. But then not everything is quite as it seems. The bomb is almost certainly not the work of the mainstream IRA, but of one of two break-away organisations determined to sabotage the talks if they can. More important still, the talks between Ahern and Tony Blair may not have been quite as much of a catastrophe as they are feared to be. Yes, they did not close many gaps. But no, it was not a breakdown. Blair and Ahern still have a high regard for each other. Can political agreement therefore be salvaged in the painfully few days remaining?

If all it took were the efforts of Senator George Mitchell, the talks chairman, the answer would certainly be yes. Today and throughout the weekend Mitchell will, in consultation with all the parties, be drafting and redrafting a paper which can form the basis of the last stage of the discussions that begin in Belfast on Monday morning. Ministers stress Mitchell's independence of mind, but he will be in close touch with both governments.

Finally there is every chance that Ahern and Blair will both travel to Belfast later next week to act as a final "court of appeal". Opinions differ about the prospects for settlement but not many people expect a positive outcome, if there is one, to emerge until the deadline is very near. Which was one inevitable difficulty about Wednesday night's talks. They covered voting systems for the Northern Assembly, which all parties now agree will be established as part of any settlement. They talked about the contentious issue of whether the assembly should have a Cabinet-style executive, as the nationalists want but the Unionists don't. And above all they debated the most – though by no means only – difficult question: the scope, powers and basis of the North-South bodies envisaged in the outline plan of a settlement.

The difference is over the nationalists' desire to see these bodies, probably under the aegis of a North-South council, given free standing, statutory powers defined by legislation in Dublin and Westminster with their own "dynamic", and the Unionists' insistence that their scope should not be specified until after the assembly is established, and even then should be subject to the overall control of the assembly and Dublin gov-

ernment. Imagine a plan for a cross border motorway from Cork to Portlaoise. On the nationalist model, a joint transport body would have the statutory power – and therefore the funding – to build the road. The Unionists, by contrast, would see the joint body recommending the road and then seeking funding for the section between Portlaoise and the border from the Northern Ireland Assembly. Unionists see the first as creeping all-Ireland government. Nationalists see the second as providing the Unionist majority with a veto over any cross-border proposal.

To understand why gaps like these are so difficult to bridge, it's necessary to understand the pressures on the participants. Ahern has to deal with some of his own Fianna Fail MPs who are asking how much the Unionists are really giving up in return for the abandonment of Articles II and III of the Irish constitution, which lay claim to sovereignty over Northern Ireland. The nationalist SDLP are looking over their shoulders at the potential electoral threat from Sinn Féin. Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness face further defections to groupings like that which was caught with yesterday's bomb.

And perhaps above all the Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble faces concerted opposition within and outside his own ranks (in the menacing form of Ian Paisley) to any deal. There is anxiety among nationalists that Tony Blair appears to be treating David Trimble with special consideration, for example by inviting him to Chequers for talks last weekend. But that misunderstands the UUP leader's special position. Nationalists have their advocates in the Dublin government. The position of the British government, and that of the tireless Dr Mowlam in particular, is necessarily not an exact parallel. Holding authority over

Negotiations have less than a week to go before their deadline.

Northern Ireland she has to be even handed between both communities. It's hardly surprising that Blair has been at some pains to articulate the fears of Ulster Unionists to nationalists and to the Irish government, and in doing so ease the dangerous sense of isolation Trimble must sometimes feel.

But all the parties will have to make further concessions if a deal is to be reached. Trimble has made two important concessions – acceptance of some form of cross-border body and the existence of a power-sharing assembly. But in a thoughtful article in yesterday's *Irish Times*, the Alliance Party leader Lord Alderdice criticised the minimalist view of the assembly held by the UUP, pointing out that "there is no point in having power sharing if there is no power to share". And he urged Trimble to see that Northern Ireland has "more to gain than to lose" from effective cross-border co-operation on tourism, the economy, transport, agriculture, security and so on. So there are hugely painful choices ahead, not least for Trimble, since many of his activists and rivals seem prepared to pay the terrible price of maintaining the status quo.

One of several big dangers next week is the poverty of expectations in Northern Ireland itself about the chances of success. There is a numb sense of fatalism among many people there about the outcome, amply justified by recent history. Blair knows all this very well; but he also still thinks that this time not one of the parties wants to take the blame for failure. If he's right – and he almost certainly is – there is hope yet.

Gilbert and Sullivan are on my little list, and they never will be missed

MPs may lament the loss of subsidy for the D'Oyly Carte Opera, but not David Aaronovitch



Hail to the Emperor of Japan – and other out-of-date institutions: the D'Oyly Carte Company perform 'Mikado'

THE MPs were of all parties and of one mind. On Wednesday morning, led by Mr Martin Bell, they rode eloquently and unanimously to the aid of an imperilled part of contemporary British society. The Tories, Mr Anthony Steen, spoke of a "unique British institution on the point of being closed". His Conservative colleague, Mr Richard Spring, described such a closure as being "a cause for national mourning". The Man in White himself was of the opinion that the matter was of the most extreme urgency. "The time is short," he warned, "the threat is real: this is the place and this is the time to sound the alarm bells."

The reader of this column will already know – from the pictures and the sub-headings – that the "real threat" was not to, say, charitable organisations funding the counselling and rehabilitation of juvenile offenders or the young victims of sexual abuse and incest. They go to the wall every day, largely unnoticed – the "alarm bells" unring.

No, it was the refusal of the Arts Council, announced this week, to fund the pirates, policemen, dancing judges and leaping peers of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company that was the reason for the debate and the speeches. Should the company go under, said Bell and co, then Gilbert and Sullivan, that one word made from three, would be lost to us, lost to Britain. "We have no Mozart, no Puccini, no Wagner," agonised Bell, "but, my goodness, we have Gilbert and Sullivan, who have entertained and illuminated our country and the world for more than 120 years."

The feeling that the Commons is entirely filled with men and women from a parallel universe was strengthened when Mr Barry Gardiner, the new Labour MP for Brent North, rose and commenced his speech thus: "I suspect that I am alone in the Chamber this morning in being entitled to wear a D'Oyly Carte necktie," he began. "Unfortunately," he continued, "I am no longer able to wear mine because of the over-zealous support and enthusiasm of my wife for a local jumble sale some months ago. Otherwise, I would certainly have sported it in the chamber this morning."

I wonder if Mr Gardiner has a Cats T-shirt, or whether that would seem a little over the top. I say this because, essentially, Gilbert and Sullivan were the Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice of the muttonchop whisker and hansom-cab age. Their impresario, Mr D'Oyly Carte himself, started things off in 1875. His company, which held the copyright on G&S, performed nothing else for a hundred years. That copyright expired in 1961, and the company closed in 1982. Only a legacy from a Dame Bridget D'Oyly Carte allowed it to start up again six years later. It's been in the financial doghouse ever since.

reason – I do not have to pay. But there is no case for taxpayers' money going to something as unnecessary and archaic as a company largely dedicated to the production of 14 operettas composed at the fin de the last sick. D'Oyly Carte, as we have seen, folded once before, for half a decade. Did you even notice? Was a lasting scar left on the nation's cultural psyche? When it came back, were you uplifted? Of course not.

D'Oyly Carte folded once before, for half a decade. Did you even notice? Was a lasting scar left on the nation's cultural psyche. When it came back, were you uplifted? Of course not.

Now, despite intense lobbying, the Arts Council has refused any more money.

Why? The MPs thought they knew. "Cultural elitism and snobbery," said Bell. "Cultural snobbery on the part of elitists," was Austin Mitchell's variation. The arts establishment "view Gilbert and Sullivan as popular, middle-brow and beneath their gaze and their contempt." So the nobles at the Royal Opera House got loads of dosh while comprehensible, popular D'Oyly Carte was being forced to the wall.

They could be right, I suppose. But if I were on the Arts Council I would not give the D'Oyly Carte a penny either. And this is not because I have contempt for the accessible. I am in favour of enthusiasts, especially where they foster a bit of do-it-yourself. I like the idea of people having sing-songs and organising their own productions: providing that (a) I do not have to attend and (b), that – within

Gilbert and Sullivan are not Shakespeare. We have the RSC, but there is no Shaw company, no outfit dedicated to Beckett or Rattigan (let alone to Sir Arthur Pinero, the dramatic contemporary of G&S). Periodically, nice new versions of things like the *Mikado* are lavishly revived at the ENO, involving proboscis geniuses like Jonathan Miller. Which is fine.

Otherwise what do you have? Pleasant music, with dated, dull ditties in rhyming couplets sung by second-rate singers. Worse, for many fans (not least the MPs), quotations from the operettas act as a substitute for real humour and wit, coming between them and invention. I absolutely dread it when anyone says to me that N or Y was "well put" in *Iolanthe* or *Ruddigore*.

But that's just my subjective view. The Arts Council has more objective criteria for its handing out of state subsidy. It is (as its mission statement

says) committed to "nurturing creativity, responding to innovation, promoting excellence, sustaining our living traditions, supporting multi-cultural interests, fostering new audiences and helping more people to encounter the work of artists throughout England". It is not, therefore, the artistic wing of King's Heritage, charged with keeping ancient forms alive.

Yet Steen speaks of the D'Oyly Carte as "an opera

in black leather and chains. It would be deemed worthy of Arts Council funding." Well, it would certainly make it a lot more interesting.

Bell's attitude makes you wonder, once again, how anything new ever happens in this seemingly hidebound country. All this and Prince Charles too. How would the buildings they now love have fared if, every time someone had applied to the King for planning application, he had been told, "don't build that new-fangled castle there, where it will overshadow those historic hovels. Wattle and daub is the true Old English style." Had the first St Paul's Cathedral not burned down in 1666, we would never have had the second. Are we to regret its loss?

So, why should we, as a nation, be paying money for ancient musical satire, when we hardly write any of our own? Why do our legislators indulge in such complacent adoration for our ridiculous institutions, when there is so much new thinking to be done? There is not air enough for every plant, and we should not allow nostalgia to blind us to the choking effect on innovation, on new shoots, by the careless watering of untrimmed, unhealthy, gnarled old bushes. Martin Bell says of D'Oyly Carte, that "the flame must not go out in our time." Oh yes it must, Martin. We should blow it out.

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Sloppy and sentimental, but oh so American ...



ANDREW
MARR'S WEEK

HE STARTS to look like one of modern history's great escapologists: Bill Clinton's April Fool's Day reprieve from the looming Paula Jones harassment trial was an extraordinary twist. Here is a man who, hemmed in on all fronts, seemed politically dead in the water. And – *shazzam!* – he's suddenly off the hook, for now at least. The Comeback Kid has done it again.

Yes, there is the Monica Lewinsky matter, which is potentially even more serious, since it involves charges of witness-tampering and the obstruction of justice. That, though, is also weakened by the Arkansas judge's decision to throw out the Jones case as "unworthy of trial". No-one should underestimate the load suddenly lifted from Clinton. He faced the court testimony not simply of Jones, but of a string of others with tales to tell. Now, unless this latest ruling is overturned, Gennifer Flowers, cabaret artist, will not sing sweetly from the witness box; Elizabeth Ward Gracen, former Miss America, will not discuss her extra-curricular experiences; the stories of Kathleen Willey and Christy Zecher, former air stewardesses, will not fly; Dolly Kyle Browning, high school sweetheart, will not reminisce in front of the attorneys.

All of this matters a lot to the Clinton team but doesn't, of course, change our perception of the man himself. However many lawyers he has around him, the world now thinks of

Clinton as a serious sexual incontinent, a big man of uncontrolled urges, who paws and unzips and says "G'mon, darling" whenever he can. Yet he's got away with it legally so far, and also – more interestingly – in terms of American public opinion. Given that Clinton is the head of an administration fiercely dedicated to political correctness and female advancement, and that the US remains a relatively puritanical country, this is, on the face of it, extraordinary.

American friends, however, say that in Britain, we "just don't get Bill". Millions of baby-boomers and ex-hippies look at him, see themselves, and adore him for it. His appetites, his sloppiness, his exasperated wife, his sentimentality and liberal instincts, his lazy, rueful grin when he's nearly caught out yet again, are all a perfect mirror for his flawed, well-meaning generation. America is not a continent, but the sprawling land of large consumption, self-forgiveness and good-natured schmaltz; and "Bill" is its chosen emblem every bit as much as Oprah Winfrey.

A philanderer? Perhaps. A potential impeach-ee? He's still that, too. But when they look at the stern and comfortable Kenneth Starr, a man who has never smoked a cigarette or touched an alcoholic drink in his life, or the buttoned-up, prim Al Gore, who'd step into the breach and preach, they'd rather stick with Slick Willy. I'm not entirely sure that they're wrong.

THE philosophy and practice of coffee, part one. Douwe Egberts, the coffee people, are now marketing an instant liquid coffee – just add boiling water – which they say tastes very like real coffee. It is called "Cafésse", suggesting essence of coffee, and it will be a failure. Why? Because we have grown accustomed to one drink, real coffee, over the past few hundred years, and another different drink, instant powdered coffee, over the past few decades, and our lives are too busy for a third.

Also, according to those who've tried it, it doesn't taste very nice. Instant essences rarely do. My grandfather Marr was chairman of James Finlay and Son, a tea company, and spent much of his life in pursuit of perfect tea – he could tell from a cup of proper Darjeeling not only which plantation it had come from, but how high up the mountains the tea bushes had been, and whether the season had been rainy or dry. Finlay and Son, like Douwe Egberts, were keen to find the essence of their product, and (this being the Fifties, before the tea bag revolution) worked on a form of instant tea contained in a toothpaste tube.

Grandpa Marr, in a state of high anticipation, visited the firm's laboratory in Switzerland, to be greeted by the most extraordinarily clean, fresh smell of tea in the air. "Ah," he said to the chemist, "so you've pulled it off." "No sir," replied the sad Swiss, "what

you are smelling is our failure." The essence wasn't trapped in the Finlay goo, but was floating free. There is a more general lesson here.

PHILOSOPHY and practice of coffee, part two. Since the takeover of *The Independent*, some people have questioned our optimism about going "up-market". Are we not all slaves to a dumbed-down, lower-grade world, they ask? One response to bouts of pessimism is: think coffee. Whichever way you look at it, the quality of British coffee is soaring. We have huge choice now in supermarkets. Consumption of real coffee has risen by more than 100 per cent in the past 15 years, while instant coffee use has barely altered. Good coffee shops are proliferating – in Wednesday's paper we profiled Alf Svensson, whose Seattle Coffee Company is growing like topsy around the country (six 18 months ago, 56 now, 120 planned by the end of the year).

And I ask: how can a country that is trading up in its coffee habits – and in its book-buying, musical tastes, magazines – be content only to trade down when it comes to newspapers? It is not possible. Good coffee and good writing go together. Any nation that is drinking as much roast and ground, and is as mad for latte, cappuccino and espresso as this one must, by definition, need a better broadsheet newspaper too.

Wing Cdr Laddie Lucas

LADDIE LUCAS was a superb wartime fighter pilot, an MP, a world class golfer who captained the Walker Cup team, a successful businessman and a fine writer.

The defence of Malta in 1942, in which he commanded 249 Squadron, was perhaps one of his greatest achievements. Often outnumbered 10 to one, his squadron shot down more planes than any other over the skies of Malta. His flair, his humour, his understanding of his men and his refusal to give in against the most daunting of odds carried him through this arduous campaign.

He was born Percy Belgrave Lucas in Sandwich Bay, Kent, in 1915. Based in the area were a company of Highlanders who would attract the attention of his young nursemaid by asking after "the wee Laddie", a name by which he would be known for the rest of his life.

His gift for golf was developed early under the tutelage of his father who was the secretary and co-founder of Prince's Golf Club at Sandwich. Laddie, a left-hander, was sinking putts at six and in his teens practised with the champion English golfer Henry Cotton. During the Second World War, in 1944, his intimate knowledge of the course probably saved his life: his Spitfire was hit by an Me 109; not at all keen to bale out, he spotted Sandwich Bay at the same moment as his engine died. Gliding in and keeping the clubhouse as a marker, he missed the 2nd, 4th, 12th, 8th and 9th to land belly-up out of bounds just short of the River Stour. He recalled being very

unhappy at the state of the greens.

Lucas was educated at Stowe, where he excelled at games. His father had died when he was 11 but his perceptive headmaster J.E. Roxburgh encouraged him to develop his many gifts. Lucas went up to Pembroke College, Cambridge, in 1934. He read Economics, captained the golf team, was the top amateur golfer in the 1935 British Open and at 19 found himself hailed as the finest left-handed player in the world. After the war, he captained the Walker Cup team in 1947 and 1949.

When he came down from Cambridge, he was interviewed by Beaverbrook for a post on the *Sunday Express*. Blunt and incisive, Beaverbrook was impressed by Lucas's replies to his questions. He took him to supper that night and asked him the same questions. Lucas gave the same answers and Beaverbrook hired him as a sports writer. That unconventional meeting touched a spark with Lucas; he learnt from Beaverbrook that you had to give young people their chance, encourage them, let them have their head, give them responsibility. In future years, he was to do so again and again. He remained with the *Sunday Express* until the outbreak of war when he volunteered for the RAF.

Lucas became one of the first pilots to learn to fly under the Empire scheme in Canada. He was posted to 66 Squadron in 1941, based in Cornwall. He took his family crest in his cockpit while carrying out

strikes against shipping in the Channel.

In February 1942 he was posted to Malta, where he joined 249 Squadron. Soon afterwards, at the age of 26, he was given command of it, and forged a fighting unit from many disparate elements - Canadians, Poles, Australians - giving them responsibilities normally reserved for more experienced pilots. Despite several forced landings, Lucas was seldom out of his cockpit.

For the next four months, the three squadrons on the island fought off German and Italian bombers, often outnumbered 10 to one and initially flying out-of-date Hurricanes against Kesselring's vastly superior Messerschmitts. It seemed that Malta was doomed, but reinforcements by sea, including Spitfires, eventually turned the tide.

The other great influence on Lucas's life, the aviator Douglas Bader, had always believed in attacking out of the sun, with the advantage of height and speed. During the Battle for Malta, Lucas successfully carried out a classic Bader attack on three Italian bombers which were guarded by 80 Me 109s, and for this feat he was awarded a DFC.

In the autumn of 1942 Lucas was assigned as personal assistant to the Duke of Kent, but he felt that his friend Michael Strutt, who already knew the Duke, would be more suited to the post. Strutt duly took it up, and two weeks later both were killed in an air crash. This event haunted Lucas for many years. In 1943, he took charge of

616 Squadron, then became leader of the Spitfire wing at Colfshill, Norfolk. In 1944 in the Ardennes, he commanded 613 Squadron and was involved in low-level tactical support missions and strikes. In 1944-45 he served with Tactical Air Force in North-West Europe. In 1945 he was awarded a bar to his DSO (awarded in 1943) for making numerous attacks on enemy communications, often in appalling weather conditions.

Also in 1945, encouraged by Beaverbrook, Lucas stood as Conservative candidate for West Fulham, but failed to be elected. He returned to the RAF to see out his commission and came back from France with bottles of champagne in the space where he had stripped out his guns. These were drunk at his wedding in 1946 to Jill Addison, the sister of Douglas Bader's wife, Thelma.

In 1950, Lucas won the seat of Brentford and Chiswick, which he held for nine years. He contributed much to the debate on aviation, but became disillusioned with his government's reluctance to join Europe. In 1959, he left to make a fresh career in commerce.

From 1946, he had worked with the Greyhound Racing Association, which had extensive property holdings including White City Stadium. He became managing director in 1957 and chairman in 1965. He expanded the stadium's use, notably hosting the evangelist Billy Graham's crusade. The firm was badly hit by the property collapse in the Seventies, and, after a difference of opinion with



Lucas: tremendous qualities of goodness, leadership and character

Photograph: Hulton Getty

the backers, Lucas took early retirement in 1975.

At the age of 60, he took up his pen again and wrote a compelling autobiography, *Five-Up* (1978). *The Sport of Princes* (reflections of a golfer) (1980), and other books including *Flying Colours: the epic*

story of Douglas Bader (1981), *Wings of War: airmen of all nations tell their stories 1939-45* (1983), *Out of the Blue: the role of luck in air warfare 1917-66* (1985) and *Malta - the thorn in Rommel's side* (1992). He then wrote three books with his wartime friend and fellow air

ace Air Vice-Marshal Johnny Johnson.

Johnson said of him: "I do not think I have ever met a finer Englishman. He had tremendous qualities of goodness, leadership and character. Everything Laddie did he did well." Max Arthur

Percy Belgrave Lucas, pilot, politician, writer, golfer, born Sandwich Bay, Kent 2 September 1915; DFC 1942; DSO 1943; bar 1945; MP (Conservative) for Brentford and Chiswick 1950-59; CBE 1981; married 1946 Jill Addison (two sons, and one son deceased); died London 24 March 1998.

John Wolfers

JOHN WOLFERS was that rare bird, a literary agent who cared more about ideas than advances. Of great intellectual seriousness and pronounced left-wing views, he was for 30 years, from the late 1950s to the early 1980s, a respected, if at times abrasive, member of the international publishing fraternity.

His passion was to help bring about the publication of books he thought important. If an author passed his exacting standards, there was nothing he would not do to help - he was insanely generous with his time, his home, his advice, his friendship - but if his sympathies (and it must be said his prejudices) were not engaged, he was as likely to tell a budding writer "to take your stinking fish elsewhere".

He was a passionate social-



Wolfers: free-thinker

ist and free-thinker - having spent a lifetime, as he put it in a letter just before his death, "devoted to Descartes and Marx" - erudite, a shade didactic, viscerally anti-establishment, music-loving,

profoundly European, in love with all things French and especially the language, a raconteur extraordinary, marvellous when sober and terrible when drunk, but above all unstoppably talkative with a mocking, irreverent turn of phrase which invariably ended in a snort of laughter.

He was born and spent his first five years in north China, at Tientsin (Tianjin), the son of Marcel Wolfers, a merchant, and his wife, Ruth, the daughter of an American Missionary, Charles Tenney, who founded a university at Tientsin and ended up as American Minister in Peking. After a spell in the United States the family returned to Britain where, no doubt on his mother's prompting, John was sent away to Leighton Park, a Quaker school in Reading. From there, at the

age of 17, he went up to Worcester College, Oxford, but left after a year to join up in 1940.

Returning to civilian life, in 1948 John Wolfers joined Rupert Hart-Davis, who had just started his publishing house, and then some years later worked with George Rainbird and John Murray, before joining International Literary Management, and then in the mid-1960s founding his own literary agency with a high-calibre list of authors.

Wolfers's wit, good looks and emotional volatility made him attractive to women, of whom there were several in his life. Among the first was the exotic Mari Tracy, who had modelled for Jacob Epstein, and with whom Wolfers lived for 10 years and had a daughter, Fabia. He was then married briefly to

a French woman, Juliette, and then to the ravishing Charlotte Baker, who having worked in the foreign rights departments of Penguin Books and Collins, shared his publishing interests and joined his agency, now renamed C. and J. Wolfers Ltd.

From the late 1960s to Charlotte's early death in 1980, these were the great days of the Wolfers's social and professional lives, centred around the tall house in Regent Square, Bloomsbury which was always an open home-from-home for authors, lovers, foreign publishers, and friends.

There was a dark side to Wolfers's character, perhaps due to a sense that his own great talents had not found a more creative outlet than managing the literary work of others. In the early 1980s, he lost interest in the world of publishing, sold

the Regent Square house, disposed of his agency, and devoted himself to bringing up Charlotte's infant son, Joseph.

It was a relationship which brought out the best in him. With Joseph, he moved across the Channel, first to a little miner's house in Dielette, in the Cotentin, and then, seeking a warmer climate, to the pretty hill-village of Seillans, inland from the French Riviera. There, Joseph became a French schoolboy (and is now engaged in cancer research in Paris), while John Wolfers turned into a sort of wise village elder, beloved of all his neighbours and still finding rich comedy in the criminal follies of the world's rulers.

His last years were marred by polymyositis, a rare but cruel disease of the immune system, which attacked his muscles

but left his mind as incendiary as ever.

Patrick Seale

The partial list of authors who were also his friends gives some idea of the rich furnishings of John Wolfers's mind, writes Peter Carson. They included J.G. Ballard, Julian Rathbone and Alistair Reid; Richard Gregory, Anthony Huxley, Hilary and Steven Rose and Nigel Calder; Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Claud Cockburn, Patrick Seale and Eleanor Philby; Raphael Samuel and Gareth Stedman-Jones; Michael and Elizabeth Ayton; Gerald Brennan, Norman Lewis, Ronald Fraser and Ian Gibson. There is the Left and Spain and history and science and always good and unusual writing.

He was able to make an informed judgement of serious non-fiction in a way few pub-

lishers were able to. Easily bridging the "two cultures", he was one of the first to promote "popular" science and one of the first to find international publishers for commissioned books, selling directly to heads of houses in Germany, France, Italy and Spain. For a publisher, to receive a book proposal from John Wolfers was always a tantalising experience, although it was sometimes easy to suspect that the elegance of presentation was as much his as his author's. His was a formidable presence, a charming, at times uncomfortable, but ultimately enriching figure in the London world of books and writing.

John Wolfers, literary agent: born Tientsin, China 24 September 1923; twice married (one son, one daughter); died Seillans, France 25 March 1998.

Robert Lewin

WHENEVER a sale of valuable stringed instruments took place at one of the big auction houses, Robert Lewin was never far from the scene. From very modest beginnings, he became one of the most knowledgeable "fiddle-fanciers" in the business, and contributed articles on the London sales in the *Strad* magazine for over 40 years.

"Bob" Lewin was born in 1906 over his father's fish shop

in Stratford, east London, and attended the local elementary school in Tottenham when the family moved there shortly afterwards. He showed an interest in music from an early age and when quite a small boy had some instruction on the violin from a local teacher. He later had lessons with the Spanish-American Achille Rivarde and the Russian-born Sascha Lasserion (a pupil of Leopold Auer),

who became one of the most celebrated London teachers in between the two world wars.

In addition to working in his father's shop, Lewin played in cinemas accompanying silent films and led a number of amateur orchestras. He was also a very able chamber music player and at one time had his own string quartet who gave broadcasts of light music from the BBC. During the Second World

War he served in the Auxiliary Fire Service.

His great interest in stringed instruments led him to be engaged as a valuer for World Auxiliary Insurance - later to become British Reserve; eventually he became recognised world-wide as one of the most respected advisers in the field.

His skills as a writer - at first for a fish trade paper, were such that by the Sixties he found him-

self contributing articles to the *Strad*, and it was here that he reported on thousands of sales at the leading London auction houses. He also wrote numerous obituaries of string players for the same journal.

Another of his passions was to study the stock market daily and when it became available on Ceefax, almost hourly. Most of his many accomplishments were self-taught and he was an

avid reader right up to the last few months before his death.

As a young man he was a keen tennis player and over the years regularly visited Wimbledon. Here again, he was an astute observer of the game and could discuss the subject with authority.

Bob Lewin always looked as if he had dressed in a hurry with clothes from a jumble sale, and had no time for sartorial ele-

gance. He had a whimsical sense of humour, and was a great practical joker and a brilliant raconteur. He was extremely generous and liked nothing better than to entertain his friends at a gourmet restaurant.

Margaret Campbell

Robert Lewin, violinist and valuer of musical instruments: born London 18 July 1906; died London 25 March 1998.



Lewin: 'fiddle-fancier'

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorials, Weddings, Anniversaries, In Memoriam) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5LJ, telephoned to 071-293 2012 (24-hour answering machine 071-293 2011) or faxed to 071-293 2010, and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra). (OTHER Gazette announcements (NOTICES, functions, Forfeiting marriages, Marriages) must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line, VAT extra. They should be accompanied by a daytime telephone number. The Independent's main switchboard number is 071-293 2000.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh held a Summer Dinner at Buckingham Palace during the annual Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM II). The Duke of Edinburgh, Patron, hosts a lunch for the International Board of Directors of Outward Bound at Buckingham Palace. The Princess Royal, President, ending for the Disabled Association visits the Prince of Wales Centre for International Journalism at Mill Hill, London. The Duke of Kent, Viscount, visits the Church House Centre, Whiteley, North Yorkshire, and as President, Sate the Children Fund, visits the day at Whiteley. The Duke of Kent, Viscount, visits the British Overseas Trade Board, visits Powerhouse (United Kingdom Exhibition, Horse Guards, London SW1). Princess Alexandra attends a concert in aid of the Leeward Channel Foundation in South West Scotland, at Easterbrook Hall, Dumfries.

Changing of the Guard

The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am. No. 7 Company Coldstream Guards mounts the Queen's Guard, at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, and provided by the Coldstream Guards.

Birthdays

Mr Alec Baldwin, actor, 40; Professor Janet Bately, Emeritus Professor of English, King's College, London, 66; Mr Timothy Bateson, actor, 72; Mr Tony Benn MP, 73; Sir Jeffrey Bowman, former chairman, Price Waterhouse Europe, 63; Mr Martin Brandt, actor, 74; Canon Anthony Caesar, an Extra Chaplain to the Queen, 74; Miss Doris Day, actress and singer, 74; Mr Dennis Farr, former director, Courtauld Institute Galleries, 69; Mr William Gaunt, actor, 61; The Duke of Grafton, conservationist, 79; Mr Helmut Kohl, German chancellor, 68; Mr Jonathan Lynn, director, actor and writer, 55; Ms Shona Meisack MP, 38; Mr Eddie Murphy, actor, 37; Sir Martin Nourse, a Lord Justice of Appeal, 66; Sir John Smith, former MP, founder of the Landmark Trust, 75; Miss Jan Sterling, actress, 73; Lt-Cdr Sir Godfrey Style, Governor, Queen Elizabeth's Foundation, 83; Mr Francis Tate, former chairman, Tate and Lyle, 85; Mr Richard Thompson, guitarist and songwriter, 49; Sir Malcolm Thornton, former MP, 59; Professor Kathleen Tillotson, Emeritus Professor of English, London University, 92; Mr John Virgo, snooker player, 52; Professor Sir Michael Woodruff, surgeon, 87.

Anniversaries

Births: The Rev George Herbert, clergyman and poet, 1593; Henry Robinson Luce, publisher and founder, *Time* and *Fortune* magazines, 1898; *Deaths*: Fortunato Esteban Murillo, painter, 1682; Bishop Reginald Heber, hymn writer, 1826;

Jesse Woodson James, outlaw, shot in the back 1882; Richard D'Oyly Carte, operatic impresario, 1901; Kurt Julian Weill, composer, 1950; Henry Graham Greene, novelist, 1991. On this day: Emmeline Pankhurst was sentenced to three years' penal servitude for inciting others to place explosives at the house of David Lloyd George, 1913; Haile Selassie (Ras Tafari) was proclaimed Emperor of Ethiopia, 1930; after two false starts, the Grand National was declared void, 1993. Today is the Feast Day of Saints Agape, Chionia, and Irene, St Burgundofara or Fare, St Nicetas, St Pantas of Taormina, St Richard of Chichester and St Stanislaus, pope.

Lectures

National Gallery: Stella Gambling, "Keys (I): keywords in Vermeer", 1pm.
Victoria and Albert Museum: Simone Mathews, "Spanish Art in the V&A Museum", 2.30pm.
Tate Gallery: Catherine Lever, "In Sickness and in Health: Munch, Kirchner and Picasso", 1pm.

Synagogue services

Details of synagogue services to be held tomorrow may be obtained by telephoning the following. Sabbath begins in London at 7.23pm.
United Synagogue: 0181-343 9999, Federation of Synagogues: 0181-222 2243, Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues: 071-580 1663, Reform Synagogues of Great Britain: 0181-349 4781, Spanish and Portuguese Jews Congregation: 0171-289 2573, New London Synagogue (Masorti): 071-328 1026.

LAW REPORT: 3 APRIL 1998

Suspended dentist did not assault her patients

Regina v Richardson, Court of Appeal (Criminal Division) (Lord Justice Otton, Mr Justice Turner and Mr Justice Dyson) 25 March 1998

WHERE patients had consented to treatment by a dentist, in ignorance of the fact that she had been suspended from practice, the dentist was not guilty of assault.

The Court of Appeal allowed the appeal of Diana Richardson against her conviction of six counts of assault occasioning actual bodily harm.

The appellant had been a registered dental practitioner until 30 August 1996, when she had been suspended from practice by the General Dental Council. Whilst still suspended, she had carried out dentistry on a number of patients. The mother of two of those patients had complained to the police, not because of the suspension,

but because the appellant had appeared to be under the influence of drink or drugs. The police had discovered she had been practising whilst disqualified, resulting in the charges.

The appellant had changed her pleas to guilty following a ruling by the judge that there had been fraud which had vitiated the patients' apparent consent to treatment.

Caroline Bradley (Registrar of Criminal Appeals) for the appellant; Peter Walsley (Crown Prosecution Service) for the Crown.

Lord Justice Otton said that the argument on appeal had concentrated on the issue of consent. The general proposition which underlay that area of the law was that the human body was inviolate, but that there were circumstances where consent might operate to prevent conduct which would otherwise be

classified as an assault from being so treated.

Reasonable surgical intervention was clearly such an exception. The question then arose as to the effect on the validity of consent if the true nature of the status of the person who, in the guise of performing a reasonable surgical procedure, subsequently inflicted bodily harm was concealed from the complainant.

Counsel for the appellant had argued that in the present case the complainants had been deceived neither as to the nature or quality of the act nor as to the identity of the person carrying out the act.

The Crown had expressly disavowed reliance upon the nature or quality of the act, and had submitted that the patients had been deceived into consenting to treatment by the representation that the appellant was a qualified and prac-

tising dentist, and not one who was disqualified. There was no distinction to be drawn between the unqualified dentist and one who was suspended, and on that basis there had been a mistake as to the true identity of the appellant.

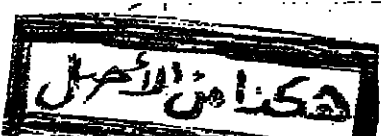
The court was unable to accept that argument. The common law was not concerned with the question whether the mistaken consent had been induced by fraud on the part of the accused or had been self-induced. It was the nature of the mistake which was relevant, and not the reason why the mistake had been made. There was an assault only where there was consent to actions on the part of a person in the mistaken belief that he or she were other than they truly were.

The Crown had contended that the concept of the identity of the person should be extended to cover the

qualifications or attributes of the dentist on the basis that the patients had consented to treatment by a qualified dentist and not a suspended one. That submission had to be rejected. In all the charges brought against the appellant the complainants had been fully aware of her identity. To accede to the submission would be to strain or distort the everyday meaning of the word identity.

The gravamen of the appellant's conduct was that the complainants had consented to treatment from her although their consent had been procured by her failure to inform them that she was no longer qualified to practice. That was clearly reprehensible and might well found the basis of a civil claim for damages, but it was not a basis for finding criminal liability in the field of offences against the person.

Kate O'Hanlon, Barrister



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FINANCIAL JOURNAL OF THE YEAR

Fears of global collapse overshadows meeting of world leaders

Japan on brink,
Sony chief warnsBy Richard Lloyd Parry
in Tokyo

THE SPECTRE of a global recession, triggered by a collapse of the Japanese economy, emerged yesterday spreading jitters through the financial markets and overshadowing a high-level meeting of the world's leaders today.

A chilling warning by the head of Sony, one of the world's largest corporations, that his country's economy was on the verge of disintegrating, came on the heels of a sequence of dismal economic news from Tokyo.

Norio Ohga, Sony president, said: "The Japanese economy is on the verge of collapsing... If the economic situation continues to decline, we will face a long spiral of deflation. This will no doubt have a damaging effect on the world economy."

Although his words were addressed to foreign reporters - and therefore to the wider world - the message compounded a bad day for the stock and currency markets in Japan. In a bitter personal attack, Mr Ohga compared Mr Hashimoto to Herbert Hoover, the American president who led the country into the Great Depression in 1929.

Mr Ohga's remarks, the strongest public criticism by a senior business-

man of Mr Hashimoto's handling of the economy, came at the end of a grim day in Tokyo in which bad news from the business sector caused a further dive on the stock exchange. Economists also confirmed Japan was in recession.

The Nikkei share average experienced its biggest one-day fall of the year, closing at 15,702.9, a plunge of 538.76 points or more than 3 per cent. The drop followed the publication by the Bank of Japan of its quarterly survey of business confidence which revealed that morale is even lower than expected.

The BoJ's "diffusion index", the difference between major manufacturers reporting favourable conditions and those experiencing hardship, was minus 31, compared to minus 11 three months ago. "A broad-based recession is thus confirmed," said Jesper Koll, JP Morgan's chief economist in Tokyo. "Now a complete downward spiral adjustment is in evidence - corporations are adjusting down sharply their targets... it will take at least one full year to reverse."

Mr Ohga's attack came as Mr Hashimoto was about to land in London for two days of talks with heads of government for the Asia Europe Business Forum. He has come under intense criticism from Europe and es-

pecially from the US for doing too little to stimulate domestic demand. Last week, the Japanese government announced a 16 trillion yen package of public spending while Wednesday saw the launch of the so-called "Big Bang", an ongoing programme of financial reform and liberalisation.

The "Big Bang" is intended to increase the efficiency of Japanese financial companies by forcing them to compete with foreign and domestic competitors - but before that happens, a number of weak firms are likely to go out of business.

The economic package disappointed businessmen like Mr Ohga because it contained no specifics of how the money will be spent. "The plan seems to call for more investment in the public sector," he said last night. "However, I believe what we need now more than ever is to stimulate consumer demand." Neither measure succeeded in halting the recent downward trend of the markets.

Hopes of an export-led recovery are slim for two reasons: the Asian economic crisis has wiped out demand in South-east Asia, previously one of Japan's biggest markets; and the United States is determined not to allow its long-standing trade deficit with Tokyo to grow once again.

Yen crisis, page 27



Norio Ohga, Sony president: 'We face a long spiral of deflation'

Energis
targets
business

By Peter Thal Larsen

ENERGIS, the long-distance telecoms supplier, yesterday unveiled an alliance which will speed up its plans to build local telecom networks in UK cities and boost its chances of competing with British Telecom in the £6bn business telecoms market.

Energis is setting up a joint venture with Deutsche Telekom and France Telecom, the German and French state carriers, to build local telecom networks in London, Birmingham and Manchester. It later hopes to repeat the exercise in five other UK cities.

The networks will allow all three companies to access business customers without having to rely on others to provide the final physical connection to the customer. Although Energis has its own long-distance network, it still has to rely on existing local operators such as British Telecom or Cable & Wireless to carry calls over the final few miles.

However, the new plans will see a new company, to be known as MetroHolding, construct a local "ring" in each of the three cities, using high-capacity fibre-optic cable. Each of the three joint venture members will then connect business customers by laying cables from the ring to the customers' offices.

Energis will own 50 per cent in the new company, with Deutsche Telekom and France Telecom each taking 25 per cent. The French and German groups said they also had an agreement that would allow Sprint, the US carrier which is the third member of their Global One long-distance joint venture, to take over some of their shares.

Mike Grabiner, Energis's chief executive, said building networks in the three cities would cost about £100m. In addition, the three consortium members are likely to spend another £100m laying cables to connect their customers to the networks. Under the terms of the agreement, Energis will build and operate the network in return for a management fee.

Mr Grabiner said the local networks, combined with Energis's national long-distance network, would allow it to offer customers a range of sophisticated data transmission services. At the moment, the company can only justify offering a direct connection to very large customers.

Analysts said the move allowed Energis to complete the construction of its network earlier than previously planned while sharing the cost. At the time of its flotation last year, the company had announced plans to build local networks.

Energis shares surged 19 per cent to close at 665p, up 106p.

Pressure on sterling eases as sales slow

By Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

THE UPWARD pressure on the pound ebbed slightly yesterday as a survey of retailers suggested the pace of spending was slowing. Sterling ended at just over DM3.08, down nearly 20 pence from Wednesday's close, while the FTSE 100 index gained another 35 points to reach 6,052.8.

Businesses were hoping for more relief from the threat of a rise in interest rates next week from figures on the service sector, due today, and on

manufacturing output on Monday.

The Confederation of British Industry reported a marked slowdown in its survey for March in the annual growth of retail sales volumes. "A further interest rate increase would be inappropriate," said Alastair Eperon of the CBI's distributive trades panel.

The latest of Easter this year explains part of the year-on-year weakness, with sales of chocolate eggs and DIY goods well below last March's levels. But the underlying trend also pointed to a slowdown in sales growth from its earlier highs.

Eddie George, Governor of the

Bank of England, told MPs yesterday the interest rate decision was finely balanced. Growth was slowing, he said, replying to questions from the Treasury committee. He added: "What the debate is about is the timing and the pace. It has to happen fairly soon and it has to go a long way."

Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, repeated his determination to avoid the short-term stop-go policies of the past. "I'm aware of the problems that exporters face. But we've got to take a long-term view," he said.

"Industry understands - its workers and managers - that they must be

careful about their wage bargaining in order to ensure greater competitiveness, particularly in relation to exports," he added, speaking at a lunch in the House of Commons.

Both the Chancellor and the Governor also claimed the pressure on sterling would ease as the financial markets came to recognise that the Euro would be a strong currency.

Yesterday's CBI survey showed 44 per cent of retailers reporting higher sales in March than a year earlier, while 30 per cent said they were down. The positive balance of 14 per cent was weaker than expected, and well down

from February's 33 per cent.

Retailers expected orders to pick up slightly in April, but they were less optimistic than any time since January 1996. The only strong performers in March were furniture and carpet stores and booksellers and stationers.

A separate survey yesterday showed the construction industry was still booming last month. The Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply survey of 130 members showed a pick-up in activity, employment and costs with clear signs of bottlenecks in longer delivery times and skill shortages.

BAe prepares for
mighty merger

By Michael Harrison

BRITISH Aerospace yesterday geared up for the restructuring of Europe's aerospace and defence industries by announcing that Sir Dick Evans is to move up from chief executive to chairman.

This is the first time since BAe was formed 21 years ago that the chairman has been drawn from the echelons of the company's senior executive. Bob Bauman retires as chairman at the annual meeting this month.

John Weston, who runs BAe's defence companies, will replace Sir Dick as chief executive while Richard Laphorne will move from being finance director to vice-chairman, concentrating on group strategy.

Mr Laphorne, one of the triumvirate of executives credited with the turnaround in BAe's fortunes in the past four years, is replaced by George Rose, who runs the companies' finance and treasury operations.



Sir Dick Evans: moving up

Mike Turner, the other senior executive member of the BAe board, remains director in charge of civil aircraft operations where his current task is to help oversee the transformation of the Airbus consortium into a single commercial entity.

Sir Dick is expected to concentrate on pushing through the merger of BAe, Daimler Benz Aerospace, Aerospaciale of France and CASA of Spain into a single European aerospace and defence company.

Outlook, page 25

German court throws out
monetary union challengeBy Imre Karacs in Bonn
and Diane Coyle in London

THE remaining opposition in Germany to European monetary union crumbled yesterday as the country's highest court threw out legal challenges to the project and the enabling legislation passed the Bundestag in its first reading.

Dismissing petitions brought by professors as "clearly unfounded", the Constitutional Court removed the final legal hurdle. Manfred Brunner, the leading anti-Euro campaigner who drew less than a thousand largely neo-Nazi demonstrators to his rally at the weekend, conceded his petition stood no chance.

One of the two petitions swept aside by the court yesterday had been submitted by four German professors in January. It had called for a postponement of monetary union, arguing that

prospective members, including Germany, had failed to meet the Maastricht criteria.

The second challenge had been filed by Hans-Heinrich Rupp, a university professor in Mainz, who claimed he was being denied his constitutional right to participate in decisions on monetary union.

The court declared it had already ruled in 1993 that adopting the euro was constitutional if the euro criteria were strictly met and parliament decided to go ahead.

Last week the Bundesbank declared the 11 member states nominated by the European Commission had indeed fulfilled the convergence criteria, although it urged that Belgium and Italy in particular should make further efforts to reduce their public debt burdens.

Monetary union is no longer a political issue in Germany. "The conditions for a stable European currency were never as good as today," said Chancellor

Helmut Kohl in the debate in the lower house. Some may disagree, notably Gerhard Schröder, the opposition Social Democrats' chancellor candidate, but no mainstream politician will vote against it.

The contrasting view came from London where Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of England, said the single currency could be marked by "strong tensions" if member countries did not make enough progress in structural reforms of their economies.

"I don't think we are talking about a situation that will cause the whole thing to blow up," he said. But he added that the pace of reform in jobs and goods markets had been very slow. "The consequences will be various forms of tension."

Mr George paid tribute to the efforts would-be members had made to meet the Maastricht criteria. But, questioned by MPs about the recent report on con-

vergence from the European Monetary Institute, he said: "The report says there is going to have to be a lot more effort," adding: "The problems increase with the number of countries that take part."

He said the UK was not unusually sensitive to interest rate changes, one obstacle to British membership suggested by some Euro-sceptics. But he stressed the need for a stable pound, although not necessarily ERM membership, for two years before joining.

His comments came as a report showed sterling's growing reputation as a "safe haven" currency has led to a marked increase in sterling issuance volume. According to the International Securities Market Association (ISMA), which yesterday published its annual report, sterling borrowings totalled \$67bn (£40bn) in 1997, a year-on-year increase of more than 30 per cent.

Outlook, page 25

1,500 jobs cut at
Cable & Wireless

By Michael Harrison

CABLE & WIRELESS Communications, the cable television and telephone operator, yesterday confirmed that it is axing 1,500 jobs - more than a tenth of its workforce - as part of a cost-cutting drive.

The bulk of the redundancies will be among backroom and support staff, who account for a third of the 12,000-strong workforce. Compulsory redundancies have not been ruled out.

All CWC's employees were briefed on the cutbacks in meetings up and down the country yesterday. But details of exactly where the axe will fall will not emerge until the company reports its annual results in May.

The rationalisation programme is the result of an "optimism re-evaluation" ordered by Graham Wallace, CWC's chief executive. He said the review, carried out by Coopers & Lybrand, had identified "significant operational efficiencies which will result in reduced unit costs". But the company declined to spell out how much the redundancy programme would cost or the level of savings it would yield.

CWC was formed last year from the four-way merger of Mercury, Nynex CableComms, Bell Cablemedia and Videotron. Since then it has cut 400 management jobs, condensed 10 call centres into three, merged its five network control centres on to two sites and imposed a recruitment

freeze. But the Coopers review identified further substantial cost savings.

"Clearly there are areas where there is fat; we simply don't need to have some of the people to perform all the functions," said a spokesman.

As part of the restructuring, increased resources will be put into growth areas of the business such as data communications and the business market generally. At present, data communications make up about 10 per cent of telecoms traffic but CWC believes this could grow to 50 per cent within five years.

Administration, finance, personnel and other support functions will bear the brunt of the cuts. The 1,500 redundancies represents a net figure. Since CWC is hiring 700 staff for a call centre in Glasgow, the level of job losses from the existing workforce will be more than 2,000. Mr Wallace said the review would also lead to improved service and confirmed CWC was sticking with plans to invest £1bn this year.

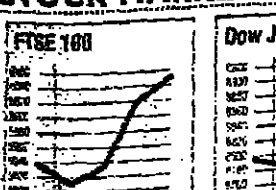
Since Mr Wallace's arrival CWC has embarked on a £400m upgrade of its long-distance fibre network. The investment is additional to the money being spent each year in build out the cable network.

It has also unveiled plans for entering the digital market through a programming link-up with BSkyB and a software deal with Netscape and Oracle to give customers high-speed access to the Internet.

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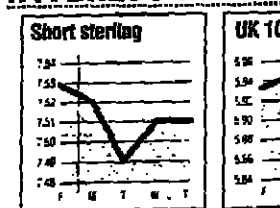
Yesterday in the markets

STOCK MARKETS



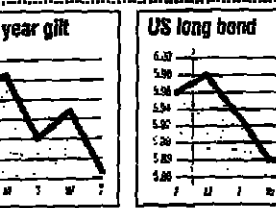
Index	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	6052.80	35.20	0.58	6105.80	4189.10	3.35
FTSE 250	5542.80	10.00	0.18	5544.40	4384.20	2.98
FTSE 350	2901.30	14.60	0.51	2917.00	2079.10	3.28
FTSE All Share	2326.98	13.65	0.59	2338.77	2056.07	3.26
FTSE Smallcap	2657.30	2.65	0.10	2638.60	2182.10	2.89
FTSE Microcap	1419.90	0.80	0.06	1415.30	1225.20	3.22
FTSE Property	1419.90	4.70	0.40	1055.70	965.90	3.05
FTSE Asia	1083.00	33.38	3.32	8859.24	6366.74	1.87
Dow Jones	2543.53	33.38	0.32	26510.75	14488.21	1.02
Nikkei	15702.9	-538.76	-3.32	16820.31	7909.13	3.61
Hong Kong	11189.71	-147.71	-1.25	16820.31	3192.35	1.87
Shanghai	217.86	22.45	0.44	5154.21	3192.35	1.87

INTEREST RATES



Index	2 month	1 yr	2 yr	3 yr	5 yr	10 yr	15 yr	30 yr
UK	7.50	1.18	7.61	0.81	5.82	-1.86	5.73	-2.06
US	5.70	-0.11	5.86	-0.47	5.58	-1.28	5.98	-1.19
Japan	0.68	0.11	0.87	-0.04	1.86	-0.50	2.47	-0.53
Germany	3.82	0.37	3.91	0.50	4.90	-1.12	5.46	-1.33

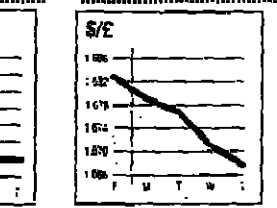
CURRENCIES



Bond Yields			
1 yr city	10 year	1 yr city	Long bond
0.61	5.82	-1.86	5.73
-0.47	5.58	-1.28	5.88
-0.04	1.86	-0.50	2.47
0.50	4.90	-1.12	5.46

S			
Age	Falls	Price (pt)	Chg (pt)
35	Laird Group	436.50	-38.50
78	Nycomed	2102.00	-148.00
02	Rat Inds	570.00	-33.50
11	Savory Hotel	1587.50	-67.50

OTHER INDICATORS



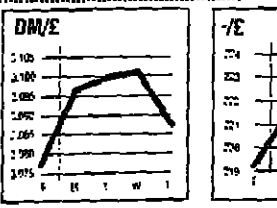
at 5 pm		at 5pm		Change	
yr ago					
-2.06	Dollar	1.6675	-0.36		
-1.19	D-Mark	3.0875	-0.95		
-0.53	Yen	222.63	-40.4		
-1.33	£ index	108.50	-0.41		

OTHER INDICATORS

% Chg	at 5 pm	Date	C
-8.11	Brent Oil (\$)	13.78	0.38
-5.58	Gold (\$)	302.35	2.40
-5.55	Silver (\$)	6.45	-0.01

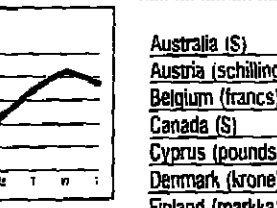
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TOURIST RATES



Country	Rate	Country	Rate	Country	Rate
Australia (\$)	2.4803	Malaysia (ringgits)	5.9888	USA (\$)	1.6311
Austria (schillings)	20.09	Malta (lira)	0.6437		
Belgium (francs)	61.99	Netherlands (guilder)	3.3787		
Canada (\$)	2.3047	New Zealand (\$)	2.9294		
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8899	Norway (krone)	12.51		
Denmark (krone)	11.52	Portugal (escudos)	305.97		
Greece (drachma)	523.67	Saudi Arabia (rials)	6.0836		
Hong Kong (\$)	12.55	Singapore (\$)	2.5987		
Ireland (pounds)	1.1916	South Africa (rand)	8.0737		
Israel (shekels)	5.5459	Sweden (krone)	13.11		
Italy (lira)	392.751	Switzerland (francs)	2.4969		
Japan (yen)	220.78	Taiwan (bahts)	61.52		
		Thailand (bahts)	392.51		

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

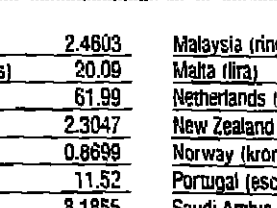


Index	at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago
Corn	456.50	87.50	17.35
Soybean	202.00	18.00	9.78
Wheat	388.50	25.50	7.00
Soybean Oil	252.00	14.50	6.11

Yr ago	West. Reg.
110.88	Feb
155.03	Feb
5.00	

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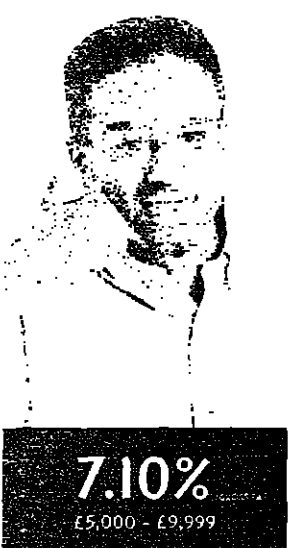
BASE RATES



6.1855	Saudi Arabia
10.06	Singapore (S)
3.0146	Spain (peseta)
523.67	South Africa
12.55	Sweden (krona)
1.1916	Switzerland (franc)
5.5459	Thailand (baht)
392.751	Turkey (liras)
220.78	USA (S)

Rates for in
Sou

Rates for indication purposes only
Source: Thomas Cook



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Interest in Courtaulds may spark bid battle

By Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

COURTAULDS, the chemicals company, which announced plans for a de-merger in February, could find itself the subject of a bid battle after announcing yesterday that it had received an approach that could lead to an offer for the group.

Attention immediately turned to Akzo Nobel, the Dutch paints group, as the likely bidder although analysts said the quality of Courtaulds coatings business could spark an auction. Interest could also come from ICI, Du Pont, Sherwin-Williams of the US, and PPG, another American company.

"This is the highest quality coatings business that has come on to the market in a decade. There will be lots of potential buyers," said Michael Eastwood, chemicals analyst at Dresdner Kleinwort Benson.

Courtaulds shares soared 17 per cent to 456.5p on the announcement, valuing the company at £1.9bn. This followed a near 8 per cent rise on Wednesday as rumours of bid interest started to swirl around the stock market. Courtaulds shares were languishing at 25.2p in January but have been rising sharply since the company announced plans to spin off its coatings and sealants business.

Some analysts suggested yesterday that a bidder might have to pay up to 550p per share to clinch victory.

Courtaulds' coatings business would be a valuable prize at it is the world leader in the

marine and aerospace industries. Its polymers division, which makes plastic packaging for toiletries and pharmaceuticals, has been put on the market. But this could also prove attractive to Akzo Nobel. It also has a polymers division which could be merged with that of Courtaulds and then spun off. Akzo has been reducing its exposure to fibres but could absorb Courtaulds viscose and Tencel fibre operations if no buyer were found for them.

Courtaulds' coating business has sales of around £1bn while polymers has sales of £500m and fibres and coatings £250m.

Courtaulds is one of the oldest names in British business, growing out of silk weaving in the early 19th century.

It pioneered the world's man-made fibre industry in 1904 with the development of viscose rayon, and its name became linked with acetate yarns in the 1920s and Courtielle acrylic fibre in the 1950s. It diversified into coatings a decade later.

More recently it has developed Tencel, which has been hailed as a "wonder fibre" in some quarters because it feels like silk, can absorb vibrant colours and yet is tough enough to be popped in the washing machine. However, its profits have been disappointing given the scale of investment.

In February, Courtaulds announced plans for a three-way split to sell polymers and demerger coatings and sealants. Analysts said it was the company's last chance of hanging on to its independence.

ICI sells detergent company for \$455m

By Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

ICI continued the re-shaping of its chemicals operations yesterday when it sold its Crosfield business to an American buyer for \$455m (£277m). Crosfield, which makes ingredients for detergents, paper and surface coatings, was acquired by ICI as part of its £4.8bn acquisition of Unilever's specialty chemicals division last year. However, it was seen as being at the more basic end of specialty chemicals and an isolated business in the ICI portfolio as the group concentrates increasingly on higher value chemicals rather than commodity products.

The business has been acquired by WR Grace & Co of Florida, a £1.5bn enterprise with interests in silica-based products and building materials.

Crosfield was founded in Warrington as a salt maker in 1815 but moved into making soap products in 1861. The Warrington site employs 512 workers whom ICI said would be transferred with the business. The group has a total of 1,400 employees worldwide.

It recorded operating profits of \$21m on sales of \$270m last year. The price represents 1.7 times annual sales and ICI said the deal would be immediately earnings-enhancing. One analyst said the price was "awesome" given the business has been hit by the strength of the pound. Analysts said the disposals were further evidence that ICI would not tolerate under-performance from any of its businesses.

Since the Unilever deal, ICI has been busy exiting the bulk chemicals sector. The total value of disposals made by ICI is now more than £4bn, close to the price paid for Unilever's specialty chemicals operations.

The shares were unchanged at 1125p.



Driving force: Nicola Foulston, chief executive of Brands Hatch Leisure, which owns four motor sport circuits. The company is exploring possible acquisition opportunities.

Sir Rodney Walker, chairman, said yesterday: "We believe that the group is now in a strong position to exploit its potential." The company is considering motor sports

acquisitions, and is also looking at horse racing, dog racing, night clubs, catering and restaurants. It lifted annual pre-tax profits to £3.55m from £2.14m a year ago.

New car launches squeeze first-half profits at Laird

By Kerry Benefield

LAIRD Group expects to suffer a profits squeeze in the first half because of its substantial investments wrapped up in a slew of new car launches, the components supplier said yesterday.

The company notched a 7 per cent increase in turnover to top the £1bn mark for the first time, but its sluggish automobile sealing system division sent share values plunging 38.5p to 436.5p.

Laird, which supplies technical rubber and plastic components, produced the sealing systems for a number of new car to be introduced this year, including the Volkswagen Golf

and Vauxhall Astra. The company will also produce sealing products for Cadillac, Citroen and the Ford Focus, which will replace the popular Escort.

Laird poured more than £90m into capital expenditure and acquisitions in 1997, in what Ian Arnott, the chief executive, called "firepower for the future". Laird's long-term agenda includes expansion in Spain, Italy, France and the US, and an £8m computer product plant planned for Ireland.

"The major investment projects do involve additional costs in the short run, and these, together with the higher costs associated with new car model launches have put pressure on profits in the initial months of 1998," the company said.

The company has run into problems with the latest version of the Golf, as the manufacturers changed specifications. "The Golf launch hasn't been easy," Mr Arnott said. The new Golf was unveiled to consumers in December.

"They've been hurt by the launches, but they will be very important to them in the future," Adam Collins, an analyst with Merrill Lynch, said. "It's hard to predict returns. The Astra and Golf were involved in specification changes and additional costs were incurred. The car company can decide to make a last minute change and the cost gets dumped on you."

Mr Collins said that a first-half crunch was to be expected because launches tended to

run up investment costs and take longer to deliver returns. "At the moment it is a pretty bad period for car launches from their point of view, but it is a second half story this year."

The strength of the pound wiped a further £6m from Laird's profits, despite 70 per cent of its output being outside of the UK. "If the pound continues to rise, it will hurt us," Mr Arnott said. "It doesn't help your competitive position."

The group reported pre-tax profits for the year to 31 December, 1997, of £67.1m, up from £66.6m previously. Earnings per share increased to 36.2p from 33.4p and total dividend rose to 14.3p from 13.0p. The results were in line with forecasts, analysts said.

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY NIGEL COPE

Senior makes quick recovery

MAKING flexible metallic tubing for car engines, jets and other industrial markets may not be glamorous but Senior Engineering has made it a highly profitable activity. The company hit problems a few years ago with its thermal engineering business, but that was sold last year and Andrew Parrish, who joined as chief executive from Williams Holdings towards the end of 1996, has impressed the City with the speed of the company's recovery.

Yesterday's announcement of operating profits up 17 per cent to £4.2m were slightly ahead of expectations and again it was the Flexonics tubing business that was the star performer. Profits there rose by 40 per cent with return on sales up to 11.8 per cent from 9.4 per cent the previous year.

The strategy to develop Flexonics geographically and acquisitions in the last year have included deals in California and India as well as in the UK. Since the year-end other deals have been signed in Holland, Denmark and Spain in areas such as aerospace, industrial and precision tubing.

Mr Parrish wants to build Senior into a £1bn sales business by the end of the decade. While Flexonics will remain the core, it seems other under-performing businesses in the engineered products and services division may be sold if returns do not improve. Profits there fell from £8.4m to £3.1m due to difficult markets.

Asia may prove a happy hunting ground for acquisitions and Mr Parrish wants to the region to account for 10 per cent of group sales by the end of next year from its current 2 per cent. Mr Parrish has already made three visits to the Far East this year and has identified three or four markets for expansion. Top priorities are Japan and South Korea. With net debt of £19m, representing gearing of 15 per cent, the group certainly has the fire-power for more deals of up to £60m. But Mr Parrish is not worried by larger deals and may tap the market for more cash to fund them.

There may be more scope to improve margins in Flexonics, though it is the other businesses, where margins are only 2 per cent, that offer the biggest opportunity.

The strong pound is a problem but Senior is not one of manufacturing's whingers, preferring to compete on the grounds of quality and service.

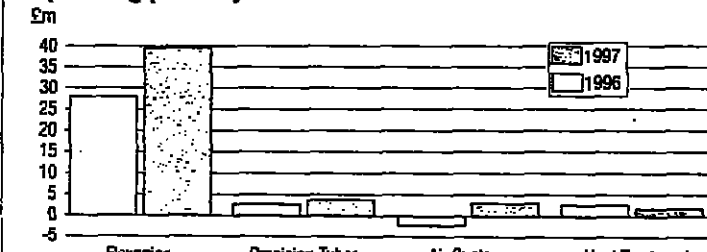
After their slump in 1994 Senior

Senior Engineering: At a glance

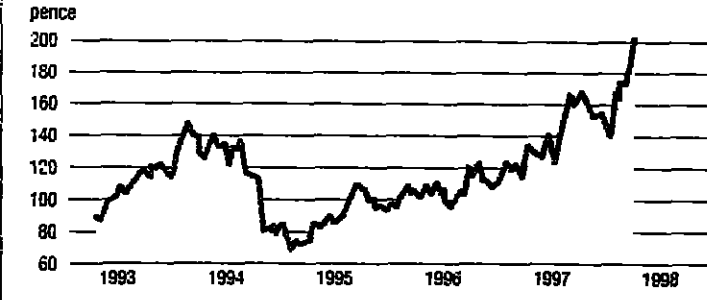
Market value: £615m, share price 202p (+18 p)

Five-year record	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Turnover (£m)	390.0	393.6	490.7	574.8	443.6
Pre-tax profits (£m)	24.2	18.1	22.1	2.7	43.1
Earnings per share (p)	6.9	4.4	5.0	(1.3)	10.5
Dividends per share (p)	3.3	3.4	3.6	3.8	4.2

Operating profit by division



Share price



shares have been rising strongly from their low of 68p and reached a new high of 202p yesterday, up another 18p.

With analysts forecasting profits of £50m this year, the shares trade on a forward rating of 17. That seems about right, Hold.

Abbey no longer such a sure bet

ABBEY NATIONAL is widely regarded as an out-and-out success story. It became the first building society to demutualise in 1989, and since then investors have had an excellent run for their money. Indeed, before publication of the bank's 1997 results back in February, it seemed as if there was no stopping the bull run in Abbey shares.

But a company cannot trade on former glories forever, and investors re-

ceived a bit of a jolt when Abbey's shares shed almost a pound after a lacklustre set of annual results.

A number of chinks have begun to show in Abbey's armour of late, the most recent being its European strategy.

Abbey has been in Europe around five years, and has yet to make much money there. Yesterday, Abbey set out to play down reports in the Spanish press that it was poised to sell its businesses there, saying the Spanish operations were merely "under review".

But the problem for Abbey in Europe is not so much whether it sells out in Spain, but more that the market is confused about its strategic direction.

Abbey has said it is not in the market for a European bank. It is understood to have serious reservations about Spain and has yet to make much of its French and Italian operations. Yet it also stresses it is terribly

important to be in Europe ahead of the euro, and that the knowledge gleaned from its European operations will give it a competitive edge in the years to come. This looks like lack of focus to some observers.

Couple this with worries about Abbey's core mortgage business, and in concern about its cost base, and the bank no longer looks a sure bet. The shares, up 25p yesterday at 1223p, are on a forward p/e of 17 and are starting to look rather pricey.

Hewden is ready to celebrate

HEWDEN STUART, the equipment hire group, is starting to celebrate the millennium earlier than most, judging by its figures yesterday. It is benefiting from a rash of millennium-related building projects across the country. Most are local authority projects which, though less ostentatious than the Dome, still mean useful work for construction companies, which are Hewden Stuart's biggest clients. Further projects, such as new stations for Rail-track or new stadia for football clubs, have added to the party.

Hewden Stuart is already the UK's leading equipment hire company and is beginning to prosper as a result. Profits in the year to 31 January grew by 31 per cent to £38.6m as companies lined up to hire cranes, access platforms, excavators, and dumpers.

Hiring equipment rather than owning it is a growing trend among contractors. It used to be tax-efficient to own a crane and set the cost against tax. Since the reliefs were abolished five years ago, contractors have turned to hire companies. Equipment is used efficiently rather than lying idle between projects.

Alistair Napier, Hewden Stuart's chief executive, is gradually clearing out the debris from the 1990s property slump. Yesterday the company announced it would sell its merchandising division, which distributes JCBs, to its management for £11m. Mr Napier also wants rid of Hewden's contracting and quarrying activities.

Charterhouse Tilney forecasts growth of over 20 per cent in 1998, bringing in pre-tax profits of £47m. Prospects are good but much of this is already in the price. While the shares came off 1p to 187p yesterday, that still gives a forward p/e of 15, a significant premium to the sector. Hold for the long term.

Another former Barings director is disqualified

The DTI has obtained a disqualification order against yet another former director of Barings, the UK bank which went into administration back in 1995 after Nick Leeson ran up trading losses of more than £800m. James Bax, at the time the most senior Barings director in the Asia Pacific region, has been disqualified from acting as a director for four years. In making the disqualification order, the Vice Chancellor in the High Court said there had been "very serious failures of management" on the part of Mr Bax.

British-Borneo buys stake

British-Borneo, the UK's third-largest oil exploration company has agreed to buy a 16.6 per cent stake in Discovery Producer Services, which owns the Discovery Project gas pipeline and processing centre in South Louisiana. It will pay \$48.3m (£29.3m) in cash and assume \$35m in debt for the stake, and said it has the option to raise its stake up to 33.3 per cent during the next three years. Discovery is 50 per cent owned by Texaco and 50 per cent by William Cos, a US natural gas pipeline company.

Orange growth lags rivals

First-quarter subscriber growth at Orange was little changed from a year ago, the mobile phone operator said, as figures showed it failed to match the year-on-year growth of its rivals. Orange added a net 117,000 customers in the first quarter, compared with 109,000 in the year-earlier period. The company now counts 1.32 million subscribers. On Wednesday, Vodafone said subscriber growth in the quarter to 31 March more than doubled. Celtel and One-2-Go also reported strong growth. Orange shares fell 5p to 401p.

Birch to be Argos chairman

Sir Peter Birch, the former Abbey National chief executive, will become chairman of Argos in May if the catalogue retailer sees off the £1.6bn bid from Great Universal Stores. Sir Peter, who joined the Argos board just after the bid was launched, will succeed Sir Richard Lloyd who is retiring. Argos will publish its final defence today including details of an expected £350m-£400m return of funds to shareholders.

Trust buys Wembley

Wembley has agreed to sell Wembley Stadium for £103m to the English National Stadium Trust, a vehicle set up to receive National Lottery funds and renovate the ageing stadium. Wembley said the trust will take ownership of the stadium on 30 June.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Asic Control (F)	12.83m (6.37m)	2,010m (1,705m)	8.5p (4.2p)	1.0p (0.5p)
BNI (I)	41.44m (£2,80m)	3,02m (3.1m)	4.5p (4.5p)	2.0p (2.0p)
Cambridge Water (F)	418.5m (204.7m)	127.8m (106.7m)	2.4p (1.8p)	1.8p (1.8p)
Equinox & Agency (I)	-	1.101m (0.828m)	18.39p (11.14p)	7.0p (-)
Hewden Stuart (F)	298.3m (276.6m)	38.6m (29.5m)	10.07p (7.53p)	3.8p (3.2p)
Johnston Group (F)	150.8m (151.1m)	4.5m (5.5m)	22.03p (20.54p)	12.0p (-)
Laird Group (F)	1,058m (982.6m)	69.8m (69.2m)	37.2p (35.0p)	14.3p (13.0p)
Remcon (F)	8.15m (8.19m)	0.444m (0.872m)	1.40p (2.70p)	nil (-)
Senior Engineering (F)	479.2m (574.8m)	43.1m (2.7m)	10.49p (17.29p)	4.24p (3.22p)
Staco International (F)	8.4m (-)	51.6m (-)	6.50p (-)	nil (-)
Teacher Network (F)	13.62m (10.42m)	1.64m (2.21m)	28.0p (2.5p)	5.0p (0p)
Verityde (F)	22.3m (22.2m)	0.860m (1.81m)	8.3p (10.7p)	5.0p (6.0p)

(F) - Full (I) - Interim



OUTLOOK ON THE CHAIRMAN- SHIP OF BAE. PROSPECTS FOR THE TELECOMS SECTOR AND EDDIE GEORGE AND THE GREAT EURO DEBATE

BAe tries out its own man in the pilot's seat

BRITISH Aerospace has had an odd collection of chairmen down the years. The present incumbent, Bob Bauman, has been pretty much faceless since he cashed in his SmithKline options four years ago to take on the non-executive, part-time post. BAE says Mr Bauman has proved an invaluable "couch" to the team of executive directors. If so his best work has been done from the stands, not the dugout.

Mr Bauman's predecessor was John Cahill, who arrived from BTR thinking that building Tornado jets was just like building rubber seals as they drop off the conveyor belt. His attempts to BTRise BAE quickly ran into the sand.

Before that BAE had Sir Graham Day as caretaker chairman. He was called in to clean up the mess left by his predecessor Sir Roland Smith. Enough said. Prior to that the chairman's shoes were filled by Sir Austin Pearce, a former Eason man who was more at home with the staff than the payload under his wings. Before that it was the urbane Lord Beswick and before him BAE did not exist.

Now BAE has decided to change tack and give one of the professionals a spin in the pilot's seat. Sir Dick Evans, who takes up the chairman's post in May, is the super salesman who earned BAE its broad and butter income for the past 20 years by stitching up the Al Yamamah arms-for-oil deal. Since he took over as chief executive in 1990 most of his time has been spent trying to keep a variety of chairman in check. Now that he gets to play with the controls all by himself in the role of executive chairman, the non-execs, led by the

former cable guy Sir Robin Biggam, will need to be in tip-top form to keep Sir Dick in check.

He may know about the business end of a Eurofighter better than most, but Sir Dick's skills as a strategist are untested and so far the grand prize of a merger with GEC has slipped through his fingers.

From now on he can expect to spend most of his time trying to put together BAE's great Euro defence consolidation with Aerospatiale of France and Germany's Daimler.

Refuelling Harrier jump jets might be a more rewarding task than having to grapple with the perfidious French. Never mind, if Sir Dick gets frustrated he can go back to counting his options and bonus shares which, at the last count, were showing a £1.8m profit.

Dialling the best story in town

THE market loves nothing better than a good story and just now one of the best stories in town in telecoms. Yesterday the Energis share price soared 19 per cent just because it did something that it had promised to do at the time of its flotation last year.

Energis, which has hung its telecoms network on the National Grid system of pylons and wires, is to build local loops in London, Manchester and Birmingham giving it direct access to a business customer base worth perhaps £3bn.

All right, there is bit more to the story than that. The vehicle for this expansion will be MetroHolding, a joint venture between Energis, Deutsche Telekom and France Tele-

com. Thus, the Continentals end up bankrolling half the £200m investment spend while Energis gets the chance to play into Global One, their international link up with Sprint of the US. As an added bonus Energis gets to keep more of the margin from those lucrative investment banks customers by cutting out BT.

Over at Cable & Wireless Communications, they are also going for the corporate customer in a big way. CWC has discovered that there are better ways to spend money than digging up the streets and has decided to focus its efforts on building up the business base by updating the old Mercury network to handle much more data transmission. This area of the market is projected to grow at a compound rate of 30 per cent a year with the addition of more broadband capacity.

Bad luck if you happen to be one of the 1,500 souls whose jobs are surplus to requirements following the "optimum restructuring review". But never mind, CWC's redundancy packages are famously generous. In response to the news CWC's share price ticked up a more modest 2 per cent. Nevertheless, like Energis, it is also comfortably above the flotation price last year.

It is, of course, not just Energis and CWC that are roaring along. BT's shares have risen by a half in a year even though the company has done nothing except fail to land MCI. Cok is also going like a train.

The question investors will have to ask themselves at some point is whether they can afford to carry on believing everyone's story at the same time. Today's state-of-the-art kit is tomorrow's obsolescent technology. A

better guide to the telecoms stocks is the quality of their management and their marketing. Right now that is conveniently being overlooked.

Eddie and the Euro-phobes

WHAT'S the difference between a Euro-pragmatist - Eddie George's description of himself - and a Euro-sceptic? The Governor's doubts about the wisdom of the single currency project, at least for Britain and for now, are well-known, but his explanation of them before the Treasury Select Committee yesterday was fascinating.

His argument runs as follows. There have been huge strides towards achieving the fiscal and monetary convergence required by Maastricht, essentially because all the wannabes have adopted a stable and cautious macroeconomic policy. Unfortunately, there has not been the same kind of micro-economic convergence, in the structure of jobs, goods and capital markets. Both kinds are necessary for the success of the Euro.

For the Continental economies, the external discipline of the Maastricht Treaty forced sound macroeconomic policies on sometimes reluctant politicians. They wouldn't have bothered if they hadn't wanted to join Euro. Mr George noted that many of his counterparts across the Channel think the external pressure will be needed to force structural reforms too.

In other words, if their countries don't join, they will never get round to sorting

out the supply side of their economies.

But the Governor believes we do things differently here. We Brits, he suggested, are a bit bolshy about external discipline. We have good policies because we want them. If that delivers convergence, fine. If not, we should carry on regardless and let the others to converge on us.

There is obviously something in this argument, as the UK has both met the formal Maastricht criteria with ease and accomplished a lot on the structural reform front without being driven by the urge to join the euro. Both kinds of convergence are certainly desirable. But it does not add up to a convincing case for not joining the Euro until every other member has matched British standards.

One reason is purely practical. Now the last serious hurdle has fallen, with yesterday's decision by Germany's constitutional court. Euro will go ahead and the benefits of the huge Euro market, with all the likely industrial restructuring, will be captured by first wave members. The other reason is that the British dislike of external disciplines identified by the Governor stems from having failed to meet them in the past. The disastrous membership of the ERM is the classic example. Joining the Euro ought to hold no fears for the UK now that both macro and micro-economic policies are as good as, or better than, Continental standards. But it remains a question of whether the economic risks of joining are outweighed by the political risks of staying out. Even the Governor's eloquent testimony cannot definitively answer that one.

Canada Life customers set for £2,200 windfalls

By Andrew Verity

MORE THAN 100,000 British policyholders of Canada Life will realise windfall gains worth on average £2,200 each following a decision to float the insurer on the Canadian stock exchange.

The Toronto-based insurer yesterday said it planned to demutualise after 36 years as a mutual company, distributing a surplus of \$2.6bn (£1.1bn) to eligible policyholders.

Half a million policyholders worldwide are entitled to a share of the surplus, giving each an average of C\$5,200, or £2,189 at current exchange rates. The insurer is expected to pay out almost all of the surplus. Policyholders are likely to have to wait until 1999 before they receive a windfall. The Canadian government is expected to pass legislation to allow demutualisations by the autumn. It is then expected to take several months before the float can go ahead.

David Nield, chief executive of Canada Life, said: "In today's world of rapid change and globalisation, we believe that, as a publicly traded stock company, Canada Life will gain the financial flexibility necessary to compete aggressively."

The company said the planned flotation was in line

with its strategy of snapping up smaller insurance companies as the industry consolidates into fewer, larger companies. In the last five years the company has made eight acquisitions. Three of them - ManuLife, Windsor Life's sales force, and Albany Life - have been British. The company has also bought a number of US insurers and was this year granted permission to open an office in China.

Midshires considering pay-off for reneging on RBS deal

BIRMINGHAM Midshires is looking to pay cash to the Royal Bank of Scotland to release it from an agreement that stops the building society discussing a £780m bid by the Halifax, writes Andrew Verity.

Midshires is considering paying a sum, perhaps running into tens of millions of pounds, to RBS after reneging on a £630m deal with the bank.

City sources said the Royal Bank of Scotland was expecting to be offered a substantial cash sum in order to compensate its shareholders for releasing Midshires from the agreement. Midshires is barred from talking to other bidders in an "exclusivity clause" drawn up

for RBS's bid last August. The clause was insisted on by Mike Jackson, Birmingham Midshires' chief executive, who was also to be offered a job on the board of Royal Bank. Midshires last week rejected the Royal Bank offer, scuppering the windfalls despite spending millions of pounds in preparation.

It is understood a cash pay-off for RBS is only one of the options under consideration. According to other reports yesterday, Halifax could offer as much as £10m in compensation. The bank wants any offer to come from the Midshires board, although the bank would ultimately pick up the tab, it was claimed.

Life schemes and it has 750,000 policyholders in the UK. However, only those with with-profits policies are entitled to a windfall.

Around 100,000 British customers have with-profits policies. The size of the windfall they receive will depend on the length of time they have held the policies and the amount of money they have committed.

Windfalls are expected to take the shape of shares, though some policyholders will be entitled to cash. Canada Life manages £20bn of investments and employs 4,050 staff, specialising in group life, health and disability insurance.

It is the oldest insurer in Canada and has been selling policies in the UK since 1906. It is one year older than the Prudential, which yesterday celebrated its 150th anniversary.

The company has only been mutual since 1962, when it was bought by its policyholders at the urging of the Canadian government. Canada was worried at the time that its best insurance companies would be gobbled up by US predators.

Sun Life of Canada, which stopped being a listed company at the same time, is also seeking to switch back to its old status.

Barings small investors beat arbitrageurs

By Andrew Verity

SMALLER investors yesterday inflicted the first defeat in recent memory on arbitrageurs who try to break up investment trusts for quick profits.

Shareholders in Barings' Tribune Investment Trust voted to defeat a proposal by Advance UK, a £50m venture fund, which would effectively have forced the £330m trust to break up.

Advance UK, backed by institutional shareholders, had proposed to make the investment trust convert to a unit trust, allowing them to realise a quick gain of 10 per cent. The gain was possible because shares in the investment trust were worth 9 per cent less than the trust's assets. If it switched to a unit trust, the assets could be sold at full value.

But small shareholders complained they were forced either to go along with the proposal, putting them into a unit trust with charges three times as high, or realise their investments, incurring a hefty bill for capital gains tax. The trust has 2,000 retail shareholders.

Investors defeated the resolution by 56.8 to 43.2 per cent in an unusually high turnout of 77 per cent. The trust remains at the centre of a two-way bid battle.

Bank merger job cuts meet rising wave of criticism

By Lea Paterson

SBC and UBS, the merging Swiss banks, are facing growing criticism over their handling of job cuts in their fixed income and foreign exchange (forex) divisions.

Four months after the banks confirmed their merger plans, many fixed income and forex staff still do not know whether they will have jobs in the new bank - their colleagues in equities and corporate finance were told two months ago.

There is also widespread unrest following the payment of so-called "derisory" bonuses. And there is continuing uncertainty over who will head up the

fixed income division at the new bank. Some sources believe the banks are "trying to sideline" Andy Scilliano, the designated head of the division.

According to one source, the two banks are backing away from making formal announcements of fixed income and forex appointments in the hope that unwanted staff leave of their own accord. A source said: "It's a gross miscalculation. Both the good and the less good fixed income people are walking out of the door."

Bonus payments are alleged to be one method used by the banks to "try to give unwanted staff a hint". Hundreds of traders in the two banks' fixed

income and forex divisions were angered by the size of their bonuses, announced in February and paid just a few days ago. Many junior traders are understood to have received no bonus whatsoever, and one of the growing number of "whinge forums" for investment bankers on the Internet - investment-banker.co.uk - received more than 80 e-mails from disgruntled investment bankers on the day bonuses were announced.

The banks are also having to deal with growing numbers of defections in other investment banking divisions. In recent weeks, numerous City names, including Hector Sants and Renaud de Planta, have resigned.

Asia blamed for profit slump at DMG

By Lea Paterson

DEUTSCHE Bank yesterday blamed the Asian crisis for a 13 per cent slump in profits at Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, its investment banking arm.

Profits at DMG were 777m German marks (£250m) in 1997, compared with DM896m in 1996. Although the figures for DMG's corporate finance and advisory unit were understood to be par-

ticularly disappointing, rumours have swept the City that Carter McLelland, the former co-head of the division, received bonuses of more than £2m last year.

Mr McLelland, along with his co-head Maurice Thompson, resigned his post after the appointment of Bill Harrison, the former Barclays' investment banking chief, as global head of corporate finance and advisory.

Mr Harrison now faces the

tricky task of merging DMG's corporate finance and advisory wing with the top end of Deutsche's corporate banking division. Further details of this merger - first unveiled earlier this year - were provided yesterday. Sources estimate Deutsche will transfer 3,000 people from its corporate banking division to DMG. The bank is expected to cut 1,200 DMG jobs outside of Germany.



The butler could still serve up a schism

The election deadline for Nationwide Building Society's non-executive board looms and there is still no official word from Michael Hardern, writes Kerry Benefield. Mr Hardern (left), the self-employed butler who jumped into the race last year trumpeting the cause of demutualisation only to meet an overwhelming defeat, has been in contact with Nationwide but no application has been submitted.

"He has been in touch with the society's secretary," a spokesman said yesterday. "He has said to us that he intends to run." If he does, the race for the available seats will be between Mr Hardern, three incumbents and Andrew Muir, a recruitment consultant from Slough.

Mr Muir has said he wants Nationwide to make payouts of between £500 and £5,000 to its members and, like Mr Hardern, is in favour of demutualising.

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COMPUTER SYSTEMS

TAKING STOCK

UTILITIES are supposed to be safe investments, but a bit on the dull side. Somewhere you can put park your savings, get a regular dividend but not expect too much in the way of capital appreciation.



That's not the case with National Grid, however. Yesterday, the company that maintains electricity pylons around the country watched its share price rise 25.5p—or 7 per cent—to 388.5p, making it the best performing stock in the FTSE 100 index.

This rise, though steep, is not out of character. In the past 12 months, National Grid shares have gained almost 70 per cent in value. But no, it's not speculation that some US giant is lining up a bid to take over one of the few parts of the electricity sector not already in foreign hands.

In fact, National Grid was largely basking in reflected glory yesterday. Because the main driver of its share price rise was the market's euphoric re-

action to news that **Energis**, the telecoms group, had sealed a joint venture with European giants Deutsche Telekom and France Telecom (to build local networks in London, Birmingham and Manchester.

Energis used to be part of National Grid until last December, when it was floated off. But National Grid, being a sensible utility, decided to hang on to 75 per cent of the shares. Since then, **Energis** shares have more than doubled in value – they added another 106p to 665p yesterday – taking National Grid along for the ride.

The Energis announcement had little effect on the rest of the telecoms sector. **British Telecom** largely shrugged off suggestions that the new joint venture would be a serious competitor in the business market with a 3p slip to 668p.

Colt Telecom, the local network operator which will face more competition from En-

Investors warmed to Cable & Wireless Communications after the cable operator confirmed savage job cuts as part of a wide-ranging restructuring programme. The shares added 7p to 411.5p.

Mobile operator **Orange**, with broker **SBC Warburg** still sitting on a large stake, gave up 51p to 401p even though new subscriber figures were in line with expectations. Broker **Dresdner Kleinwort Benson** advised investors to switch into rival **Vodafone**, up 0.5p to 62.5p.

The market yesterday hit another new peak, adding 35.2 points to 6052.8 as traders shrugged off renewed gloom in Tokyo, which dragged down the Nikkei index. Liquidity continued to flow into the market, while a buoyant start on Wall Street helped London shares in the afternoon session.

But figures from **Foreign & Colonial** introduced a note of caution. The fund manager

pointed out that the first quarter of 1998 was the best three-month period for the FT All-Share index since 1987, and the best for the Footsie since 1992. David Manning, head of UK equities, said: "There is little room for disappointment in the UK market."

Share Spotlight
share price, pence

National Grid

Month	Share Price (pence)
April	200
May	210
June	240
July	220
August	240
September	260
October	280
November	270
December	300
January	340
February	380

Source: Bloomberg

as the chemicals group revealed that it had received a bid approach. Speculation about the identity of the predator settled on Akzo Nobel, the Dutch group, although ICI, unchanged at 1125p was also named. The news sparked a re-

newed flurry of interest in the specialty chemicals sector, many of whose constituent companies are expected to be swallowed up by larger groups in the coming few years. Inspect gained 14.5p to 252p while Laporte was 20p better at 831.5p and Albright & Wilson added 4p to 182.5p.

Directors were out in force buying shares yesterday. TI, the engineering group, added 15p to 525p as Lady Lewinton, wife of chairman Sir Christopher, bought 20,000 shares at 533p.

Sir Brian Pitman, the Lloyds chairman who is also a non-executive director of Next, decided to support the retailer by buying 2,000 shares at 574p. Sir Brian had barely

attended his first board meeting before Next announced massive profit warning which wiped a quarter off the company's value.

However, his support could not revive the share price which slipped 12p to 56½p on a sell recommendation from broker HSBC.

Pace Micro Technology, making set-top decoders for televisions, jumped 5p to 51½p on news that directors David Hood and Robert Fleming had each bought 2.8 million shares at 44.5p. The move gives Mr Hood, one of the company's original founders, a 25.9 per cent stake in the company while Mr Fleming now has 5 per cent.

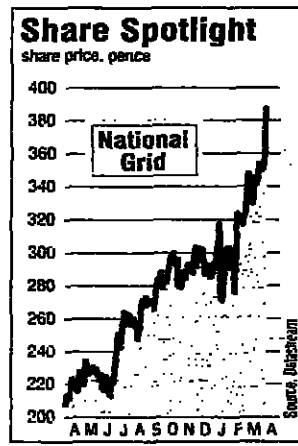
Security and fire group Williams dipped 5p to 478 after Credit Lyonnais Ltd issued a sell recommendation pointing out the group's premium rating, poor cash flow, moderate growth and poor track record in delivering shareholder value.

MORE heavy trading.

MORE heavy trading in nursing home minorow Tamaris, where 91 million shares changed hands. Schweco Nominees, acting on behalf of Stockton Industries, revealed it had a 4.14 per cent stake. Chairman William Fitch recently bought a 20 per cent stake at 3p a share. The shares firmed 0.5p to 2.75p.

INTERNET Technology Group providing Internet connections, announced 6p on ADM. It has leased 155MB of capacity on a transatlantic cable in a 25-year deal. Although the capacity is six times more than ITG had before, it is costing no more. The company is free to sell the capacity it isn't using on to

TRACKER Network, which provides satellite tracking of stolen cars and exports the British Police among customers, announced an eightfold increase in profits to £1.64m, and unveiled plans to transfer its shares from AIM to the official list. The shares jumped 75p to 717.5p.

[illegible]

Currency slips after warning by 'Mr Yen'

Stephen Vines
in Hong Kong

A FALL in the Japanese yen beyond 133 to the US dollar would be "excessive", Eisuke Sakakibara, the country's Vice Finance Minister - known as Mr Yen - said yesterday. The Yen promptly slid, closing at around ¥134 to the dollar and most analysts think it has further to fall.

So much then for the currency once seen as a viable alternative point of reference for Asian currencies, in place of the mighty US dollar. Hovering close to a rate of ¥135 to the dollar, the yen is reaching a crisis point where massive government intervention will be required to prevent a freefall.

The arrival of Japan's "Big Bang" financial reforms on Wednesday, now dubbed the "Big Whimper", has put in place mechanisms to free trade in foreign exchange and facilitate more active trading of the yen.

Now that it is easier to buy and sell, investors need to be given good reasons to do it. They certainly did not come on the day for trading was liberalised. Japan's 19 biggest banks collectively wrote off a record \$76bn (£340m) in problem loans, probably the biggest write-off in history.

The poor condition of the banking sector is mirrored by the depressing outlook for the industrial sector as reflected in the gloomy "Tankan" report from the Bank of Japan which suggested that the economic downturn was getting deeper.

The unthinkable prospect of major corporate failures is now a reality. On Tuesday Yamachi Securities, Japan's largest stock broker, closed its doors; others too have fallen.

Critics of Japan's economic

policies say repeated economic stimulus packages are doing nothing for domestic demand. Last week the government announced a spending package worth £73m. Even this was greeted with little more than a derisive sniff by investors.

Economists in Tokyo argue the only alternative is for the government to cut taxes. The government is opposed to this because it is preoccupied by the growing budget deficit which now stands at ¥105 trillion. Not only does the government believe tax cuts would put an end to hopes of reducing the deficit but the Hashimoto administration would suffer such a loss of face if it bowed to pressure, it would have to resign.

This leaves Japan with no obvious way out of the recession except for an even greater export drive. The problem is that Asian markets are in no fit shape to take more Japanese goods. The US is taking more but a rapid escalation of Japanese exports could fuel protectionist pressure, which in turn could damage the long term interests of Japanese business.

Caught between a rock and a hard place the government is aiming itself with a range of sticking plasters, where, arguably, surgery is required. It is not even clear whether the administration is prepared to intervene in the markets to stop the freefall of the yen.

Meanwhile the government has come up with no plausible reasons to persuade investors to buy. It looks as though its further fall will in turn drag down other Asian currencies. This is a far cry from earlier hopes that somehow Japan would rescue fellow Asian economies and free them from the tyranny of the ever strengthening dollar.



Looking for better times: A high proportion of single mothers are already economically active, according to the study by Income Data Services

Welfare to work raises unrealistic expectations

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

FRESH doubts have been raised about the prospects for the Government's welfare-to-work projects just as the New Deal for the young unemployed goes nationwide. Two separate reports published yesterday warned that hopes for the schemes were unrealistically high.

Income Data Services, the employment research consultancy, said analysis of the working patterns of lone parents showed that a high proportion already worked. Government plans would make them better off if they had a job, but more lone mothers are in work than the politicians suggested.

Official figures show that four out of 10 lone mothers are employed, and another one in 10 is already looking for work, according to IDS. Those with school-age children are even more likely to be employed, with 70 per cent of lone mothers with

children over 11 in employment. Among lone mothers educated to degree level, the proportion working climbs to nearly 90 per cent.

The report concluded: "Lone mothers in particular are more likely to benefit from the childcare tax credit." This subsidy, announced in the Budget, was well-targeted as it would mainly go to low earners, it said.

Separately, a new book by David Willets, a minister in the Conservative government, claims the New Deal has generated unrealistic expectations. Among the concerns highlighted by the book, published by the Social Market Foundation, are the fact that the Government's schemes will mainly help those who would have found jobs anyway, and the problem that jobs are not available in the places where unemployment is highest.

Mr Willets points out that unemployment in the two main categories of people qualifying for the New Deal, those aged

18-24 unemployed for more than six months and older claimants unemployed for more than two years, had already fallen more rapidly than the jobless total.

The book also notes that half of those eligible come from just 18 small areas in a handful of cities. The areas of high unemployment have few vacancies and few participating employers.

The Department for Education and Employment said yesterday that more than 16,000 unemployed 18-24 year-olds have taken part in the New Deal since the scheme was launched in 12 trial areas in January.

The multi-billion-pound programme, under which employers are paid £50 a week for taking on an eligible person, will roll out throughout the country from Monday.

IDS Report 758, April 1998, 0171 250 3434. 'Welfare to Work' by David Willets, Social Market Foundation, 0171 252 7060.

PEOPLE & BUSINESS

JOHN WILLCOCK



FORMER colleagues of Quintin Price, head of pan-European equities at HSBC Investment Bank until his departure before Christmas, are wondering how he will fare in his new job as Boots' director of corporate development.

Mr Price's new role at the stores group is yet to be officially announced. He will join in about a month, reporting to Boots's finance director, David Thompson.

Mr Price joined James Capel in 1987, the broker that later became part of HSBC, and while a stores analyst there he managed to tip Sears, Kingfisher and WH Smith, shortly before all three performed disastrously.

Happily all three stocks subsequently recovered, but this history has prompted wags to wonder whether Mr Price's brief at Boots might be to go and find the next Ward White, the Halfords and AG Stanley business which proved an unmitigated disaster for Boots.

All very churlish, no doubt. Mr Price's former colleagues are also wondering how he will fare in the Midlands, outside the cosy, pin-striped environs of the Square Mile.

THERE was a nasty shock at yesterday's press conference to announce the joint venture between Energis, France Telecom and Deutsche Telekom. All ended happily, however.

As the assembled executives were being grilled by Fleet Street's finest, one Deutsche Telekom senior director, Rex Stephenson, slumped across the top table, ashen faced.

As fellow directors went to his aid, one asked the assembled gathering: "Does anyone have any first aid skills?" There was, I am sad to say, a distinct lack of journalists running forward to volunteer their services.

Anyway, Mr Stephenson soon recovered from his "turn", and was able to quip: "It shows I need my holiday." His hole in fact start today. We wish him well.

GEORGE LOUDON, a Dutchman who was born in New York and spent four years at the helm at the old Midland Montagu, has popped up as a non-executive director of CMG, the IT out-sourcing company.

CMG itself was founded in the UK but has

grown faster in the Netherlands, and now has a quote on both the London and Amsterdam Stock Exchanges. As such Mr Loudon, who was educated in the Netherlands and at Balliol and speaks fluent Dutch, should be an asset. The much travelled chap also speaks fluent French, German and Spanish, and has worked at Lazard Freres and the Ford Foundation in New York, as well as a stint at McKinsey. He is currently a director of Arjo Wiggins Appleton and Geveke NV.

Mr Loudon replaces Joop Feilzer, vice chairman of Fortis AMEV, a Dutch/Belgian financial group, who retires from the CMG board this year.

TALKING of much-travelled people, Barclays Capital has just hired a young Frenchman who recently spent two years helping to advise the Russian government on its economic reforms.

Jacques Delpla, 31, joins the bank from the Hautes Etudes Commerciales, one of those impossibly high-flown French establishments where the élite is groomed to rule. He is joining the bank as European economist and EMU strategist based in Paris.

Mr Delpla has been lecturing on economic and monetary union, the French economy and the former USSR, which links him with Bob Diamond, Barclays Capital's chief executive. Mr Diamond also started his career as a lecturer. Way back in 1976 Mr Diamond lectured at the School of Business at the University of Connecticut.

Also joining Barclays Capital is Timothy Bond, who is coming from Moore Europe Research Services in London to be the bank's head of European and Japanese interest rate strategy.

DAVID WENT hasn't wasted any time getting stuck in at Irish Life, which he joined from Coutts as managing director last month.

Out goes Jean Wood, who retires as chief executive of Ireland (Retail). In comes Brian McConnell as chief operating officer for the Group. Mr McConnell joins from NatWest, where he was regional managing director in Birmingham. Before that he was chief executive of Ulster Investment Bank.

A spokesman for the company insists this does not presage an avalanche of other management changes. "We have the team we need to take the company forward," he says.

Jean Wood expressed his wish to retire from Irish Life some months ago, and Mr Went plans to do the job himself. There are no plans for a successor for Ms Wood.

GRANVILLE Private Equity Funds is opening a US office in New York and has hired Gary H Solomon as chief executive officer.

Mr Solomon has spent the last 16 years in the private equity sector as a partner with Abbott Capital Management in New York, "a leading gatekeeper", it says on the announcement.

Apparently a "gatekeeper" is private equity parlance for the middleman who advises public and corporate pension funds on their investments in private equity vehicles. So now you know.

Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	Dollar	Spot	1 month	3 months	D-Market	Spot
UK	10000	23355	23300	0.5987	0.6006	0.6024	0.6042		
Australia	10000	23355	23300	0.5987	0.6006	0.6024	0.6042		
Canada	10000	23355	23300	0.5987	0.6006	0.6024	0.6042		
France	10000	23355	23300	0.5987	0.6006	0.6024	0.6042		
Germany	10000	23355	23300	0.5987	0.6006	0.6024	0.6042		
Italy	10000	23355	23300	0.5987	0.6006	0.6024	0.6042		
Japan	10000	23355	23300	0.5987	0.6006	0.6024	0.6042		
Netherlands	10000	23355	23300	0.5987	0.6006	0.6024	0.6042		
Sweden	10000	23355	23300	0.5987	0.6006	0.6024	0.6042		
Switzerland	10000	23355	23300	0.5987	0.6006	0.6024	0.6042		
US	10000	23355	23300	0.5987	0.6006	0.6024	0.6042		

Other Spot Rates

Country	Spot	Dollar	Country	Spot	Dollar
Australia	10000	23355	France	10000	23355
Canada	10000	23355	Germany	10000	23355
UK	10000	23355	Italy	10000	23355
Japan	10000	23355	Netherlands	10000	23355
Sweden	10000	23355	Switzerland	10000	23355
US	10000	23355			

Interest Rates

Country	Rate	Country	Rate	Country	Rate
UK	2.25%	France	2.50%	Germany	2.50%
Canada	3.00%	Italy	6.50%	Spain	2.75%
US	5.50%	Sweden	5.00%	Switzerland	3.50%
Netherlands	3.00%	Denmark	3.50%	Japan	4.35%
South Africa	3.00%	South Africa	3.00%	South Africa	3.00%

Bond Yields

Country	3mth	1yr	2yr	5yr	10yr	30yr
Australia	4.81	4.01	4.05	4.05	4.04	4.04
Canada	3.65	3.65	3.65	3.65	3.65	3.65
France	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25
Germany	3.85	3.85	3.85	3.85	3.85	3.85
Italy	5.12	5.12	5.12	5.12	5.12	5.12
Japan	4.01	4.01	4.01	4.01	4.01	4.01
Netherlands	3.58	3.58	3.58	3.58	3.58	3.58
Sweden	4.27	4.27	4.27	4.27	4.27	4.27
Switzerland	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
US	4.23	4.23	4.23	4.23	4.23	4.23

Money Market Rates

Country	Rate	Country	Rate	Country	Rate
UK	2.25%	France	2.50%	Germany	2.50%
Canada	3.00%	Italy	6.50%	Spain	2.75%
US	5.50%	Sweden	5.00%	Switzerland	3.50%
Netherlands	3.00%	Denmark	3.50%	Japan	4.35%

Liffe Financial Futures

Contract	Settlement	High	Low	Settlement	Open
Long Call	Jun-98	10.81	10.81	10.81	10.81
Short Call	Jun-98	10.81	10.81	10.81	10.81
Long Put	Jun-98	10.81	10.81	10.81	10.81
Short Put	Jun-98	10.81	10.81	10.81	10.81

Commodity Indices

Index	Value	Index	Value	Index	Value
Oil	17.00	Gold	387.00	Wheat	1.00
Grain	17.00	Silver	1.00	Copper	1.00
Iron Ore	17.00	Platinum	1.00	Palladium	1.00
Lead	17.00	Nickel	1.00	Zinc	1.00

Industrial Metals

Alum	Cash	3mth	6mth	12mth	12mth
Alum	10000	23355	23300	23355	23300
Copper	10000	23355	23300	23355	23300
Gold	10000	23355	23300	23355	23300
Iron	10000	23355	23300	23355	23300

Precious Metals

Gold	Cash	3mth	6mth	12mth	12mth
Gold	10000	23355	23300	23355	23300
Silver	10000	23355	23300	23355	23300
Platinum	10000	23355	23300	23355	23300
Palladium	10000	23355	23300	23355	23300

Other Softs

Index	Value	Index	Value	Index	Value
Oil	17.00	Gold	387.00	Wheat	1.00
Grain	17.00	Silver	1.00	Copper	1.00
Iron Ore	17.00	Platinum	1.00	Palladium	1.00
Lead	17.00	Nickel	1.00	Zinc	1.00

Latest Unit Trust Prices

Fund	Price	Fund	Price	Fund	Price
AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00
AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00
AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00
AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00

Unit Trust Prices

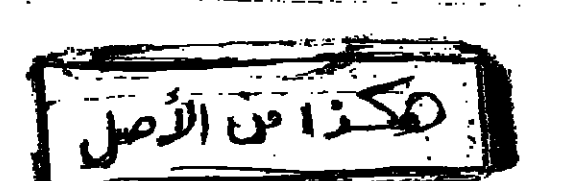
Fund	Price	Fund	Price	Fund	Price
AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00
AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00
AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00
AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00

Unit Trust Prices

Fund	Price	Fund	Price	Fund	Price
AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00
AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00
AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00
AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00

Unit Trust Prices

Fund	Price	Fund	Price	Fund	Price
AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00
AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00
AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00
AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00	AIM Growth Trust Ltd	1.00



Schofield's new-style coaching can help Giants make leap

NOT just Huddersfield, but the whole of Super League, would welcome evidence tonight that Garry Schofield can coach and pick players as a rugby league coach, just as he used to as a player.

Schofield, put in charge of the Huddersfield Giants during the close season, faces the first of a series of giant-sized challenges with the visit of the reigning champions, the Bradford Bulls.

The general expectation outside the club might be that neither he nor his newly promoted side will be up to the job, but the former Great Britain captain intends to surprise everybody.

Huddersfield only sneaked into Super League because of

the demise of Paris and their reward for the coach who had steered them into second place in the First Division. Steve Ferris was the sack.

Instead, they installed Schofield, with another member of the Giants' playing staff, Phil Veivers, as his assistant. It was a curious old-fashioned move, relying as it does on a hunch that a distinguished playing record is the best qualification for a coaching career.

There are plenty of fine players whose coaching capabilities - or lack of them - have seemed to disprove the theory.

But, like his great friend Lee Crooks, who has just taken over at Keighley, Schofield

accepts that he starts learning a new set of skills now and that his jointly held record of 46 Test caps for Great Britain confers no automatic advantages.

That is why he leapt at the opportunity this winter to learn from a master - the Brisbane Broncos' coach, Wayne Bennett, who, apart from being arguably the most successful coach in the world, also happens to be Veivers' brother-in-law.

"The time we spent there was so valuable," Schofield says. "We've come back with so many ideas. We have a lot of things up our sleeves and we are going to surprise a lot of people."

Although Huddersfield are

Promoted Huddersfield and their new coach face a first test of their Premiership credentials tonight. Dave Hadfield reports

not short of money, Schofield has not gone in for extensive restructuring of his team during the winter. That, he says, is because he had confidence in what he had already got.

"I know some supporters have been disappointed that I didn't go out and sign 10 or 12 new players, but I saw wholesale changes, year after year, at Leeds and it just doesn't work. It takes a season or two seasons to get used to each other and this group of players has re-

sponded very well to my training methods and to what I want them to achieve.

"It starts with discipline. I was always disciplined as a player and I expect the same from them. At the same time, you can't be serious all the time and we do have a laugh. But then, when there's work to be done, I put my boss's hat on."

"The first thing I have to do is to get them believing in yourself, because if you don't do that you're beaten before you start."

Schofield always had faith in his own ability as a player - that was how he developed the trademark interception technique that had much to do with making his name - and he now carries the same principle into his coaching.

"Take our pack," he says. "I've got a lot of confidence in them. There's size there - and plenty of experience. Every one who comes to the McAlpine Stadium - starting with Bradford - is going to know they're in a match. I can promise you that."

"We're getting knocked before we've kicked or passed a ball, but at the end of the season people will be saying that the

Huddersfield Giants are a pretty respectable side after all."

Schofield is still registered as a player, although he says he will only turn out in an emergency. Mind you, much the same was said about Veivers - a year his senior at 33 - and he is in the team to play Bradford, which suggests that Huddersfield's emergencies are coming early.

The Bradford coach, Matthew Elliott, would rather be playing the newcomers six or eight weeks into the season, when the initial adrenalin rush has worn off and the reality of facing Super League opposition week after week has started to bite.

"That's fair comment."



Schofield: Full of ideas

Schofield said, "But we know ourselves that it's going to be hard every week. The challenge for us is to play as though we're up against the Bradford Bulls every time we go on the field."

Skerrett stays at Halifax

By Dave Hadfield

ONE of Britain's most experienced prop forwards, Kelvin Skerrett, has signed a new contract that will keep him at Halifax for the coming Super League season.

The former Bradford, Wigan and Great Britain forward joined Halifax last year, but made only seven appearances because of a broken arm.

Skerrett will become the lowest-numbered prop in the competition, switching to wearing the squad number of four, because he associates last season's No 20 shirt with bad luck with injuries.

Bradford are set to use the versatile Nathan Graham at hooker in the opening match of their defence of the Super League title at Huddersfield tonight.

Graham, who has also played full-back, wing and stand-off for Bulls, stands in for James Lowe, who will miss the opening weeks of the season through injury.

The Leeds prop, Barrie McDermott, will also miss the start of the season. McDermott failed last night in an appeal against a five-match ban for a dangerous tackle and fighting.

Neil Tunncliffe has been confirmed in his role as chief executive of the Rugby League. The 33-year-old Doctor of Philosophy from Oxford University had been filling the role on a trial basis since Maurice Lindsay was forced out in January.

"I'm delighted to have the opportunity to continue the work I have been doing over the last three months and that the policies I've set in train have been to the satisfaction of the game," he said.

Tunncliffe denied that one of his pet projects, the imposition of a salary cap on clubs, had been diluted by dispensations granted to some by the Rugby League Council this week.

Under the changes, the London Broncos and four other clubs have had withheld money returned and a ban on new signings lifted.

"It was what the whole game wanted, but clubs still have to get below 50 per cent," he said.



Lawrence Dallaglio was a youthful audience as he gets a lift from England's training session at the Bank of England ground in Roehampton yesterday

Photograph: David Ashdown

Bateman's difficult decision Saracens sign up Penaud

By Andrew Baldock

THE Wales centre Allan Bateman has been given more time to decide whether he should play in Sunday's potentially decisive Five Nations Championship game against France at Wembley.

Bateman's six-year-old daughter, Naomi, is suffering from a serious eye complaint, and was yesterday awaiting the results of extensive tests carried out at Kingston Hospital in Surrey.

Bateman has maintained regular contact with the Welsh Rugby Union through their doctor, Roger Evans, and was

to make a decision on his availability last night.

The Wales coach, Kevin Bowring, has given the Richmond and Lions player compassionate leave from every training session this week, including today's work-out before departure for the squad's Buckinghamshire hotel. The WRU will make an official announcement today, but the Llanelli centre Neil Boothby is ready to replace Bateman, with Pontypridd's versatile Dafydd James joining the Welsh substitutes.

"Allan is waiting for the results of tests," said a WRU spokesman, Lyn Davies. "He's being given as much as

time as possible to make up his mind about Sunday, and there is absolutely no pressure being put on him."

Bateman has proved the inspiration of Wales' Five Nations campaign, scoring tries against England and Ireland, sandwiched by a brilliant man of the match display in the victory over Scotland last month. He started the year alongside fellow Lion Scott Gibbs in midfield, but injury ruled Gibbs out against Ireland and Cardiff's Leigh Davies took over as Wales triumphed 30-21 at Lansdowne Road.

Davies and Boothby would forge Wales' third different cent partnership in six weeks.

the Llanelli player winning his fifth and last cap against Tonga almost four years ago.

Following the successes of Wales A in this season's Five Nations Championship, their manager, David Pickering, wants more matches for his flourishing team. Wales end the campaign against France A at Bridgend tonight after racking up 40-point away victories over England and Ireland, sandwiched by an 18-10 home defeat to the Grand Slam winners, Scotland.

Six of the side that helped rout England A 41-22 will be among the 22 senior players on duty for Sunday's Wembley game against France.

By Chris Hewett

MICHAEL LYNAGH was just about the finest outside-half in the world when he first agreed to spend his dotation at Saracens two years ago. Alain Penaud, his long-sought and much-hyped replacement, is not even the best stand-off in France at the moment, but his move from the fanatical rugby heartland of Brive to the mushrooming stronghold of Wulfrum nevertheless suggests that the buoyant north Londoners will remain a power in the land.

Penaud, capped 30 times and a veteran of two memorable Heineken Cup finals, has agreed a three-year deal with François Penaud's double-chasing outfit

and will begin training with his new club-mates in July. "He plays a very physical game and has a fantastic left boot and while he does not kick goals for Brive, it is only because they do not give him the opportunity," Penaud said. "It's something we'll address immediately. We see him as our goal-kicker next season."

Penaud pronounced himself well satisfied with his club's latest acquisition and, given the South African's shrewd assessment of talent, it was no mean recommendation. Penaud may not be the most consistent playmaker general in the game but when he hits a hot streak, extraordinary things tend to happen.

"He's one hell of a talent," smiled Saracens' director of

rugby, Mark Evans, who scoured Europe before finally settling on his and Penaud's original choice. "Just as important, he's our type of player. If you look at the big foreign signings we've made - François, Michael and Philippe Sella - you'll see they were all one-club men. Alain has been loyal to Brive for almost 12 years and that says a good deal about his character."

For Penaud, now 28, the move amounts to "a new start, a second breath", and he has not ruled out a return to international rugby. "That is in the hands of the selectors - but the motivation is there," he said. "Especially as I have the chance to follow in the footsteps of Lynagh. That means a great deal to me."

HYPERION
2.10 Epica 2.45 Quango 3.20 Rustic Air 3.55
Bucks Delight 4.30 Overman 5.00 Country
Orchid

GOING: Good (Good to Firm in places)
Left-hand undulating course. Easy fences and long run on
chase course of 600yds.

ADMISSION: Free (except for 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th 9th 10th 11th 12th 13th 14th 15th 16th 17th 18th 19th 20th 21st 22nd 23rd 24th 25th 26th 27th 28th 29th 30th 31st 32nd 33rd 34th 35th 36th 37th 38th 39th 40th 41st 42nd 43rd 44th 45th 46th 47th 48th 49th 50th 51st 52nd 53rd 54th 55th 56th 57th 58th 59th 60th 61st 62nd 63rd 64th 65th 66th 67th 68th 69th 70th 71st 72nd 73rd 74th 75th 76th 77th 78th 79th 80th 81st 82nd 83rd 84th 85th 86th 87th 88th 89th 90th 91st 92nd 93rd 94th 95th 96th 97th 98th 99th 100th 101st 102nd 103rd 104th 105th 106th 107th 108th 109th 110th 111th 112th 113th 114th 115th 116th 117th 118th 119th 120th 121st 122nd 123rd 124th 125th 126th 127th 128th 129th 130th 131st 132nd 133rd 134th 135th 136th 137th 138th 139th 140th 141st 142nd 143rd 144th 145th 146th 147th 148th 149th 150th 151st 152nd 153rd 154th 155th 156th 157th 158th 159th 160th 161st 162nd 163rd 164th 165th 166th 167th 168th 169th 170th 171st 172nd 173rd 174th 175th 176th 177th 178th 179th 180th 181st 182nd 183rd 184th 185th 186th 187th 188th 189th 190th 191st 192nd 193rd 194th 195th 196th 197th 198th 199th 200th 201st 202nd 203rd 204th 205th 206th 207th 208th 209th 210th 211st 212th 213th 214th 215th 216th 217th 218th 219th 220th 221st 222nd 223rd 224th 225th 226th 227th 228th 229th 230th 231st 232nd 233rd 234th 235th 236th 237th 238th 239th 240th 241st 242nd 243rd 244th 245th 246th 247th 248th 249th 250th 251st 252nd 253rd 254th 255th 256th 257th 258th 259th 260th 261st 262nd 263rd 264th 265th 266th 267th 268th 269th 270th 271st 272nd 273rd 274th 275th 276th 277th 278th 279th 280th 281st 282nd 283rd 284th 285th 286th 287th 288th 289th 290th 291st 292nd 293rd 294th 295th 296th 297th 298th 299th 300th 301st 302nd 303rd 304th 305th 306th 307th 308th 309th 310th 311st 312th 313th 314th 315th 316th 317th 318th 319th 320th 321st 322nd 323rd 324th 325th 326th 327th 328th 329th 330th 331st 332nd 333rd 334th 335th 336th 337th 338th 339th 340th 341st 342nd 343rd 344th 345th 346th 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Aintree revival prompts Nicholson's revelry

By Richard Edmondson
at Aintree

A RUN that threatened to be longer than The Mousetrap's ended here in quite brilliant fashion yesterday when David Nicholson's Escartefigue won the Martell Cup.

Jackdaw's Castle, the Duke's Gloucestershire base, is quite appropriately accustomed to receiving trinkets on a regular basis but before yesterday's feature contest the yard had gone 52 runners without a winner. Nicholson is not used to that.

Escartefigue not only curtailed the sequence, he also established himself as a potential Gold Cup winner in 1999. Ladbroke's offer only 8-1 about that eventuality as Escartefigue exhibited that even though he may still be in the nappies of a novice he is already a combatant of some potency. Just Florida Pearl, his Cheltenham conqueror in the Royal & Sun Alliance Novices' Chase, now stands above him in the blue riband ante-post list.

Unlike others in the field, Prestbury Park excursions did not appear to have drawn irrevocably from the six-year-old, Dorans Pride, in particular, ran as if he would rather be under a parasol with a cocktail at his side. Nicholson would like to be there with him. "There won't be a spring in my step when I go to bed tonight," the trainer said. "They'll be carrying me up there."

"Escartefigue will be something nice to dream about when you've got to dream Gold Cups if he can do that as a novice. It was a good performance to beat those experienced horses and he was always jumping as well as any of them, if not better than most."

"I'd love to take on Florida Pearl again on heavy ground. You'd like to think of them being Arkle and Mill House. I hope I've got Arkle."

The other notable performance of the contest was Paul Carberry's on Unguided Missile. Gordon Richards's chaser got high enough at the first obstacle to clear a line of matchboxes, but no higher. Carberry nevertheless maintained the union and did so again when his mount staged a repeat later in the race, suggesting that when the jockey was levered into the



After you Joe Tizzard shows the way to a reluctant Cherrynut in the John Hughes Trophy at Aintree yesterday. Photograph: Julian Herbert/Allsport

plate his seat must have been staple-gunned to the saddle. Carberry's skills were further in evidence in the following Sandeman Maghull Novices' Chase, in which he partnered the accident-prone Direct Route. The gelding has been labelled as an unreliable conveyance but he soon got an opportunity to disprove the reputation when he was required to skip over the stricken Grey Guy after the third obstacle.

Direct Route stalked the Arkle Chase winner, Champagne, into the straight with Carberry poised stylishly on his withers. The jockey appeared as if he was trying to touch the moon with his bottom. Soon after the last he was over it as Di-

rect Route cantered past his rival. While the flamboyance was with one Irishman, the force was with another in the predictable shape of Tony McCoy. The

RICHARD EDMONDSON
NAP: Or Royal
NB: Cherrynut (Aintree 3.10)

champion jockey scored twice, bullying home a shattered Fataliste in the opener and then expending far less energy aboard Cyfor Malta in the John Hughes Trophy Chase over the National fences. Cyfor Malta, like Escartefigue, is still in the turf's kindergarten and was the first

one, one of five runners for Martin Pipe. La famille Pitman should have been represented by four animals, but are now down to matriarch Jenny's Nahtien Lad. Mrs Pitman's Mudahim came off the gallops yesterday with a grumbling tendon and joined son Mark's Superior Finish and her own Amtrak Express on the sidelines.

Avro Anson too may not be required for duty as the sudden ground is all against him. His absence would reduce the National field to 38 as the expected withdrawal yesterday of Addington Boy, Belmont King, Senior El Beatriu and Time For A Run were augmented by the removal of Glenmot, Evangelica, Thermal Warrior and Valiant Warrior from consideration.

Field for tomorrow's National				
	C	H	L	T
1-2145 SUNNY BAY (10) C Brooks 8 10	G Bradley	7-1	7-1	7-1
2-2245 ROUGH QUEST (10) C J Gray 8 11	M Piggott	6-1	6-1	6-1
3-2245 CHALLENGER DU LUC (10) M Piggott 8 11	A McCoy	14-1	14-1	14-1
4-2245 SCOTTISH BANKS (10) T Egan 8 11	A Wray	40-1	40-1	40-1
5-2245 BALLY DO (10) C D McKeown 8 11	R Johnson	20-1	20-1	20-1
6-2245 EARTH SLAMMER (10) N Tizzard 8 11	C Llewellyn	14-1	14-1	14-1
7-2245 AVRO ANSON (10) M J Piggott 8 11	R Piggott	20-1	20-1	20-1
8-2245 NANTHLEN LAD (10) M J Piggott 8 11	R Piggott	20-1	20-1	20-1
9-2245 DUN BELLE (10) C D McKeown 8 11	P Tacey	20-1	20-1	20-1
10-2245 GENERAL CRACK (10) P Nicholls 8 11	M J Piggott	20-1	20-1	20-1
11-2245 GO UNIVERSAL (10) C D McKeown 8 11	M J Piggott	20-1	20-1	20-1
12-2245 CHELSEA (10) P Nicholls 8 11	P Tacey	20-1	20-1	20-1
13-2245 COURT MELODY (10) P Nicholls 8 11	T J Murphy	20-1	20-1	20-1
14-2245 CELTIC ARMY (10) M J Piggott 8 11	M J Piggott	20-1	20-1	20-1
15-2245 HAM OF PRASE (10) C D McKeown 8 11	C F Sayer	20-1	20-1	20-1
16-2245 INTO THE RED (10) C D McKeown 8 11	D Gallagher	100-1	100-1	100-1
17-2245 WHAT A HAND (10) P Nicholls 8 11	C Maclean	60-1	60-1	60-1
18-2245 ST MELLON FARMWAY (10) P Nicholls 8 11	A Thornton	40-1	40-1	40-1
19-2245 SAMBLE (10) C D McKeown 8 11	R Dwyer	12-1	12-1	12-1
20-2245 GRANGE FIVE (10) C D McKeown 8 11	A Wray	40-1	40-1	40-1
21-2245 GREENHILL TAKE AWAY (10) P Nicholls 8 11	M J Piggott	100-1	100-1	100-1
22-2245 STORMTRACKER (10) P Nicholls 8 11	M J Piggott	20-1	20-1	20-1
23-2245 YEOMAN WARRIOR (10) P Nicholls 8 11	P Tacey	100-1	100-1	100-1
24-2245 FORD HOUSE (10) C D McKeown 8 11	M J Piggott	100-1	100-1	100-1
25-2245 BRAVE HIGHLANDER (10) J Gifford 8 11	P Hild	20-1	20-1	20-1
26-2245 HULLWALK (10) R Cuthbert 8 11	M J Piggott	20-1	20-1	20-1
27-2245 JOE WHITE (10) C D McKeown 8 11	M J Piggott	100-1	100-1	100-1
28-2245 DUNAL DANCER (10) M Piggott 8 11	R Thornton	150-1	150-1	150-1
29-2245 MILLERMAN (10) C D McKeown 8 11	S Curran	40-1	40-1	40-1
30-2245 DO RIGHTY (10) M Piggott 8 11	P Hild	100-1	100-1	100-1
31-2245 FABRICATOR (10) M J Piggott 8 11	J Sayer	200-1	200-1	200-1
32-2245 PASITO (10) M Piggott 8 11	Kearney	100-1	100-1	100-1
33-2245 RADICAL CHOICE (10) J Thornton 8 11	B Storey	100-1	100-1	100-1
34-2245 DUNAMIS (10) M Piggott 8 11	J Evans	200-1	200-1	200-1
35-2245 CHERRY (10) M Piggott 8 11	R Gifford	60-1	60-1	60-1
36-2245 GRIFFIN BAR (10) M Piggott 8 11	G Tacey	20-1	20-1	20-1
37-2245 WINTER BELLE (10) J H Johnson 8 11	M C Bower	200-1	200-1	200-1
38-2245 MAPLE DANCER (10) J H Johnson 8 11	G Tacey	200-1	200-1	200-1
39-2245 DISCOVERY (10) M Piggott 8 11	P Carberry	50-1	50-1	50-1

HYPERION'S TV TIPS

lier form - including a half-length second at Chepstow to yesterday's Aintree winner Escartefigue - she would certainly enter the reckoning this afternoon. Cherrynut is very much the dark horse here, having had just the one run under Rules. He beat only out-of-form horses at Warwick in January, but the manner of victory was undoubtedly impressive. BOSS DOYLE, though, has by far the most solid credentials for this contest. At Leopardstown, on his penultimate outing, the challenger from Tipperary gave 7lb to the formidable Florida Pearl - yet was beaten by only a length.

3-45: Enda Bolger is the most skilful rider in this amateurs' cavalry charge over the Grand National fences, but his mount, Elegant Lord, was a disappointing favourite at Cheltenham. LORD RELIC, a creditable second to the useful Teeton Mill at Leicester recently, will be better suited than most by today's easier ground. The capable Janie Cusack could well bring the consistent King Torus into a place.

4-20: Unlucky Baxer scumbled to victory in the Guld Card Handicap Hurdle at Cheltenham, extending his winning sequence this time to six. The bookies will be offering skinny odds about him today, and an each-way investment on BRACEY RUN seems better value. Jim Old's eight-year-old has run better than his recent placings at Chepstow and Kempton suggest.

Aintree

2.00 Rainwater (nb)	4.20 Bracey Run
2.35 Strong Promise	4.50 WHIP HAND (nap)
3.10 Boss Doyle	5.20 Glitter Isle
3.45 Lord Relic	

GOING: Grand National course - Good to Soft (Soft in places); Midway course - Good to Soft (Good in places); Hurdle course - Good (Good in places). There are two left-hand turns in the Grand National and the Midway course is a mile round with conventional park fences. The Hurdle course is a mile round with conventional park fences.

LEADING TRAINERS: D. Nicholson 15 winners from 66 runners (success rate 24.2%), P. Nicholls 12 winners from 55 runners (success rate 21.8%), J. Piggott 10 winners from 45 runners (success rate 22.2%), M. Piggott 10 winners from 45 runners (success rate 22.2%), M. Piggott 10 winners from 45 runners (success rate 22.2%).

FAVOURITES: 70 wins in 51 races (35.3%).
UNDEFEATED: 10 wins in 10 races (100%).

2.00 MARTELL MASTER NOVICE HURDLE (GRADE 2) (CLASS A) £25,000 added 2m 4f Penalty Value £17,576

1-2145 BALLYDOON BEAUTY (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	R Dwyer	7-1
2-2245 GINGER FOX (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	C F Sayer	14-1
3-2345 FRODO BAGGINS (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	C F Sayer	14-1
4-2445 MELBOURNE (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	M J Piggott	14-1
5-2545 BALLYDOON BEAUTY (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	M J Piggott	14-1
6-2645 BALLYDOON BEAUTY (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	M J Piggott	14-1
7-2745 BALLYDOON BEAUTY (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	M J Piggott	14-1
8-2845 BALLYDOON BEAUTY (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	M J Piggott	14-1
9-2945 BALLYDOON BEAUTY (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	M J Piggott	14-1
10-3045 BALLYDOON BEAUTY (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	M J Piggott	14-1

2.35 MUMM MELLING CHASE (GRADE 1) (CLASS A) £80,000 added 2m 4f (Midway course) Penalty Value £53,400

1-2145 MERRY GALE (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	G Bradley	7-1
2-2245 ONE MAN (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	A McCoy	14-1
3-2345 OR ROVAL (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	N Williamson	14-1
4-2445 STORMTRACKER (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	N Williamson	14-1
5-2545 OPERA NAT (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	N Williamson	14-1

3.10 MUMM MELLING NOVICE CHASE (GRADE 2) (CLASS A) £40,000 added 3m 1f (Midway course) Penalty Value £26,344

1-2145 OTTOMA (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	T Murphy	7-1
2-2245 BOSS DOYLE (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	R Dwyer	14-1
3-2345 OTTOMA (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	R Dwyer	14-1
4-2445 OTTOMA (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	R Dwyer	14-1
5-2545 OTTOMA (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	R Dwyer	14-1
6-2645 OTTOMA (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	R Dwyer	14-1
7-2745 OTTOMA (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	R Dwyer	14-1
8-2845 OTTOMA (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	R Dwyer	14-1
9-2945 OTTOMA (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	R Dwyer	14-1
10-3045 OTTOMA (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	R Dwyer	14-1

GOING: Grand National course - Good to Soft (Soft in places); Midway course - Good to Soft (Good in places). There are two left-hand turns in the Grand National and the Midway course is a mile round with conventional park fences. The Hurdle course is a mile round with conventional park fences.

LEADING TRAINERS: D. Nicholson 15 winners from 66 runners (success rate 24.2%), P. Nicholls 12 winners from 55 runners (success rate 21.8%), J. Piggott 10 winners from 45 runners (success rate 22.2%), M. Piggott 10 winners from 45 runners (success rate 22.2%), M. Piggott 10 winners from 45 runners (success rate 22.2%).

FAVOURITES: 70 wins in 51 races (35.3%).
UNDEFEATED: 10 wins in 10 races (100%).

3.45 MARTELL FOXHUNTERS' CHASE (CLASS B) £20,000 added 2m 6f (Grand National course) Penalty Value £15,565

1-2145 ANDROMEDA (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	M J Piggott	7-1
2-2245 ANDROMEDA (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	M J Piggott	7-1
3-2345 ANDROMEDA (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	M J Piggott	7-1
4-2445 ANDROMEDA (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	M J Piggott	7-1
5-2545 ANDROMEDA (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	M J Piggott	7-1
6-2645 ANDROMEDA (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	M J Piggott	7-1
7-2745 ANDROMEDA (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	M J Piggott	7-1
8-2845 ANDROMEDA (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	M J Piggott	7-1
9-2945 ANDROMEDA (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	M J Piggott	7-1
10-3045 ANDROMEDA (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	M J Piggott	7-1

GOING: Grand National course - Good to Soft (Soft in places); Midway course - Good to Soft (Good in places). There are two left-hand turns in the Grand National and the Midway course is a mile round with conventional park fences. The Hurdle course is a mile round with conventional park fences.

LEADING TRAINERS: D. Nicholson 15 winners from 66 runners (success rate 24.2%), P. Nicholls 12 winners from 55 runners (success rate 21.8%), J. Piggott 10 winners from 45 runners (success rate 22.2%), M. Piggott 10 winners from 45 runners (success rate 22.2%), M. Piggott 10 winners from 45 runners (success rate 22.2%).

FAVOURITES: 70 wins in 51 races (35.3%).
UNDEFEATED: 10 wins in 10 races (100%).

4.20 BELLE EPOQUE SEFTON NOVICE HURDLE (GRADE 1) (CLASS A) £35,000 added 3m 11f (Midway course) Penalty Value £25,300

1-2145 ANDROMEDA (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	G Bradley	7-1
2-2245 ANDROMEDA (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	A McCoy	14-1
3-2345 ANDROMEDA (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	N Williamson	14-1

4.50 ODDISONS HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS B) £20,000 added 2m 4f Penalty Value £14,200

1-2145 MULLAGH (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	N Johnson	7-1
2-2245 MULLAGH (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	N Johnson	7-1
3-2345 MULLAGH (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	N Johnson	7-1
4-2445 MULLAGH (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	N Johnson	7-1
5-2545 MULLAGH (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	N Johnson	7-1
6-2645 MULLAGH (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	N Johnson	7-1
7-2745 MULLAGH (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	N Johnson	7-1
8-2845 MULLAGH (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	N Johnson	7-1
9-2945 MULLAGH (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	N Johnson	7-1
10-3045 MULLAGH (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	N Johnson	7-1

GOING: Grand National course - Good to Soft (Soft in places); Midway course - Good to Soft (Good in places). There are two left-hand turns in the Grand National and the Midway course is a mile round with conventional park fences. The Hurdle course is a mile round with conventional park fences.

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FAVOURITES: 70 wins in 51 races (35.3%).
UNDEFEATED: 10 wins in 10 races (100%).

5.20 PERRIER JOUT HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS B) £15,000 added 3m 1f (Midway course) Penalty Value £10,397

1-2145 LAND AFFAIR (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	M A Piggott	7-1
2-2245 LAND AFFAIR (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	M A Piggott	7-1
3-2345 LAND AFFAIR (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	M A Piggott	7-1
4-2445 LAND AFFAIR (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	M A Piggott	7-1
5-2545 LAND AFFAIR (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	M A Piggott	7-1
6-2645 LAND AFFAIR (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	M A Piggott	7-1
7-2745 LAND AFFAIR (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	M A Piggott	7-1
8-2845 LAND AFFAIR (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	M A Piggott	7-1
9-2945 LAND AFFAIR (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	M A Piggott	7-1
10-3045 LAND AFFAIR (10) (C) M J Piggott 8 11	M A Piggott	7-1

GOING: Grand National course - Good to Soft (Soft in places); Midway course - Good to Soft (Good in places). There are two left-hand turns in the Grand National and the Midway course is a mile round with conventional park fences. The Hurdle course is a mile round with conventional park fences.

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FAVOURITES: 70 wins in 51 races (35.3%).
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First show

Aintree - 2.00

Horse	C	H	L	T
One Man	7-1	7-1	7-1	7-1
Strong Promise	7-1	7-1	7-1	7-1
Or Royal	14-1	14-1	14-1	14-1
Opera Nat	14-1	14-1	14-1	14-1
Merry Gale	14-1	14-1	14-1	14-1

Aintree - 2.35

Horse	C	H	L	T
One Man	7-1	7-1	7-1	7-1
Strong Promise	7-1	7-1	7-1	7-1
Or Royal	14-1	14-1	14-1	14-1
Opera Nat	14-1	14-1	14-1	14-1
Merry Gale	14-1	14-1	14-1	14-1

Aintree - 3.10

Horse	C	H	L	T
One Man	7-1	7-1	7-1	7-1
Strong Promise	7-1	7-1	7-1	7-1
Or Royal	14-1	14-1	14-1	14-1
Opera Nat	14-1	14-1	14-1	14-1
Merry Gale	14-1	14-1	14-1	14-1

Aintree - 3.45

Horse	C	H	L	T
One Man	7-1	7-1	7-1	7-1
Strong Promise	7-1	7-1	7-1	7-1
Or Royal	14-1	14-1	14-1	14-1
Opera Nat	14-1	14-1	14-1	14-1
Merry Gale	14-1	14-1	14-1	14-1

Aintree - 4.50

Horse	C	H	L	T
One Man	7-1	7-1	7-1	7-1
Strong Promise	7-1	7-1	7-1	7-1
Or Royal	14-1	14-1	14-1	14-1
Opera Nat	14-1	14-1	14-1	14-1
Merry Gale	14-1	14-1	14-1	14-1

Aintree - 5.20

Horse	C	H	L	T
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Wreh keeps Arsenal talking right language



FA CUP COUNTDOWN

A Liberian stand-in striker has kept Arsenal's Double hopes afloat. Clive White reports

IT COULD be said that Christopher Wreh did not so much catapult to fame at the Reebok Stadium on Tuesday evening as somersault his way there, with a double backward flip that was almost as impressive as his 25-yard winning strike. If it was not for the fact that he celebrates most of his goals in this manner, one might have mistook it as an explosive sign of relief.

Success has been a while coming for the 23-year-old Liberian and there were many among the Highbury faithful who doubted whether that day would ever arrive. Since it was mooted at one point that the great George Weah might be coming to Arsenal the arrival instead of his cousin was regarded as something of a let-down. One look at Wreh and many came to the conclusion that all he had in common with the Milan player was three out of four letters in their surnames.

But his critics had overlooked the complication of his transfer last summer from Monaco, which the French club fiercely resisted, and caused him to miss Arsenal's entire build-up to the season. Since



Raise a smile: Christopher Wreh enjoys his spectacular goal - and celebration - in Tuesday's victory over Bolton

Photograph: Allsport

when he had to play catch-up while mainly making just the odd appearance as substitute.

The suspension of Dennis Bergkamp and the injury to Ian Wright, have given Wreh and Nicolas Anelka, Wreh's 19-year-old team-mate from French football, the extended first-team runs they needed to mature and show what they were capable of.

Tuesday night's goal by Wreh - his second in five starts - could not have come at a better time

for the club as they challenge for what at Christmas appeared a highly improbable Double.

Arsène Wenger says he has every confidence in his two young forwards, knowing that if they can conjure just a single goal between them against Wolves in Sunday's FA Cup semi-final at Villa Park and against Newcastle on Saturday week in the Premiership (the last of Bergkamp's three match suspension) the old dependables in defence can be

relied upon to hold on to any advantage.

Wreh has promised a triple backward somersault if he were to score at Wembley, but if his gymnastics are to be confined to the touchline so be it. "It's not a problem for me if Ian Wright comes back and takes my place," said Wreh, who, while in France, was always taken with Wright's antics when scoring. "I have nothing to prove. I won't get angry because he had the position

before I arrived. As a young player I've got to accept that. I've got more time to play my football."

Besides, Wright has been a confidant to him, encouraging Wreh during the bleak winter months at Highbury. "I worked hard to get where I wanted and now practice has made perfect," he said. "I'll play in any position the manager wants me to - I think I've surprised some people with my versatility."

The game in which it all

finally came together for Wreh was not the occasion of his first goal for the club, against Wimbledon, but at home to Manchester United, in November, a game in which he missed two clear-cut chances in the space of 10 minutes. "It was from then that I started to become more confident and told myself, 'I can make it,'" he said.

From Monaco to Edgware, where he lives with his wife and young son, may be a bit of a

comedown in some respects but English football has provided him with a fresh challenge while "an English trophy in my first season would look good on my record".

Not that Wreh is a novice when it comes to the big occasion. Wenger blooded him as a 17 year old alongside Jürgen Klinsmann against Spartak Moscow in the Champions' League, and later fielded him as a substitute in a European Cup semi-final against Milan.

"I enjoyed my football in France," he said. "It's a more simple game there. But here you have to be smart, you have to watch your back - it's very physical. You have to be fit to play."

It also helps if you are also multilingual, which Wreh is. He converses on the pitch with half the Arsenal side in French, the other half in English. And if Wenger ever succeeds in luring Weah to Highbury his cousin will be talking to him in Kru, one of 13 dialects in Liberia.

It was Weah who recommended Wreh to Wenger when the former Arsenal manager was at Monaco. Given that the youngster was playing for a team called the Invincibles at the time his talent might otherwise have taken some spotting. For his move to England the work permit was not a problem since Wreh is first choice for his native country, though there have been times when he has despaired of any international ambitions.

"As a country recovering from civil war it's very difficult. We have the talent but there's no money and no one to promote it. George and I have to play our own fight to return for internationals. Sometimes I say, 'I'm not going to do it any more', but I love my country so I buy a ticket and go."

It was back in Liberia where he first learned to somersault. "It's something I've done ever since I was a little boy in Africa, playing on the beach. We would all try to outdo one another, my friends and I." But it is Wreh who has finally leapt to fame.

Real may lose tie after post collapse

THE European champions, Borussia Dortmund, filed an official complaint yesterday over the lengthy delay caused by the collapse of a goal before the start of their European Cup semi-final at Real Madrid.

Real won Wednesday's first leg 2-0 but Dortmund claim they were disadvantaged by the 75-minute delay and have complained to Uefa, the European game's ruling body.

In a further potential embarrassment to Real, the Spanish media reported that Uefa and Dortmund officials had measured the goal at the other end of the Santiago Bernabeu stadium, and found it to be three centimetres below the regulation height of 244cm. A Uefa Cup game between Spartak Moscow and the Swiss side Sion was replayed after a similar case earlier this season. Real were not available for comment.

The goalposts were pulled down by bolterous Real fans minutes before the scheduled kick-off and a spare set of posts had to be brought from the club's training ground.

Dortmund president, Gerd Niebaum, labelled the game a "joke", and demanded that Uefa order a replay or award the tie to Borussia. "The players had to wait in the dressing-room, their concentration was gone and all the preparation wasted. Unlike the Spanish clubs, we are not a team that can play football at 11.30 at night," he said.

"I know how dedicated to fair play Uefa are. If we did not lodge an official protest, it would leave the door open for similar cases in the future."

If Dortmund were awarded the game as punishment against Real, they would enter the second leg on 15 April with a 3-0 lead. The goal frame was attached by supporting wires to the perimeter fencing and collapsed after members of the notorious *Ultras Sur* gang swung on the cables.

Real Madrid officials have been reluctant to take severe action against the *Ultras Sur*, but they may have to act now. The fans made Nazi gestures towards German fans and players, as they did in the quarter-final tie against another German club, Bayer Leverkusen. The behaviour continued later on the streets close to the stadium.

The Dortmund protest has taken the gloss of a Real win which stretched their unbeaten streak in European competition against German opposition to 12 matches. Their goals came from Fernando Morientes and the French international Christian Karembeu.

Whoever prevails when this semi-final is eventually settled will surely meet Juventus in the final. The Italian side gained an emphatic 4-1 win over Monaco in their semi-final first leg in Turin, with Alessandro Del Piero hitting a hat-trick.

Dispute over Kinkladze fee

By Alan Nixon

MANCHESTER CITY are locked in a price war with the Dutch club Ajax over the transfer of Georgi Kinkladze.

The Georgian midfielder has met Ajax officials and is close to agreeing a £16,000 per week five-year contract. However, City and Ajax are more than £2m apart in their valuations of the player. City want £5.5m for Kinkladze - which is less than the Maine Road club would have earned had they accepted a recent bid from Everton. However, Ajax are only willing to pay around £3.5m.

Roy Joyce, the City manager, said: "We have told them what we want and we are talking about £5.5m. We are selling him because we need the money, so we won't lower the fee."

Paul Gascoigne will make his league debut for Middlesbrough

at West Bromwich Albion tomorrow. The England midfielder, a £3.45m buy from Rangers last week, has been building up his fitness in training after his second-half substitute appearance against Chelsea in the Coca-Cola Cup final at Wembley last Sunday.

Viv Anderson, Boro's assistant manager, said: "We have eight important games left in our promotion run-in. Gazza will be involved in all of them, which is great for the team."

The League set-up in Scotland is clouded in confusion only six weeks before the end of the season.

A Scottish League management committee meeting in Glasgow yesterday failed to clear up the problems over reconstruction. The 10 Premier League clubs have still not confirmed their breakaway move and are continuing discussions

with the League and the Scottish Football Association to set it up. The other 30 clubs cannot agree on whether they want two divisions or three divisions next season.

Preston North End have suspended their French striker Habib Sissoko following an incident after last Saturday's game against Wigan.

Sissoko, who has been at Deepdale for six weeks, was allegedly involved in a scuffle with a team-mate. He claims he was racially abused, and the Professional Footballers' Association have been called in to launch an investigation.

The former Aberdeen manager Roy Aitken has declared that he wants to take over from Terry Venables as the Australian national coach, if, as expected, the former England coach leaves his post when his contract expires in July.

Brown extends Scottish reign

CRAIG BROWN will lead Scotland into the new millennium after signing a new four-year contract. The Scotland manager, who will be in charge until at least 2002, has finally put pen to paper after being offered the deal by the Scottish Football Association at the turn of the year.

Doug Smith, chairman of the SFA's international committee, said: "This contract will make him the longest-serving Scotland team manager and is a reward for his excellent record."

Brown was appointed Scotland manager in November 1993, succeeding Andy Roxburgh. Under his guidance Scotland have played 38 matches, winning 20, drawing six and losing 12.

Brown steered the nation to Euro 96 and then to this year's World Cup finals, succeeding in difficult qualifying groups.

Promotion ban stuns Merthyr

Non-League notebook

By Rupert Metcalf

MERTHYR TYDFIL, two points clear at the top of the Dr Martens League, will be not be promoted to the GM Vauxhall Conference if they win the title.

The Welsh outfit were shocked to be told last week that they do not meet the Conference's promotion criteria. The main stumbling block is that the current Merthyr club had not been trading for one year prior to the deadline of 1 April set by the GMVC. The club underwent a change of ownership last year, and Merthyr Tydfil FC 1997 was registered as a new company on 28 April.

Peter Hunt, Merthyr's secretary, described the promotion ban as "totally out of order". He pointed out that the club have spent a considerable sum improving their stadium, Pen-y-darren Park, so that it is up to Conference standards, and he insisted that Merthyr were not a new club, but an old club under new management.

Merthyr have now learned that Conference officials will pay them a ground-grading visit next Monday, despite the promotion ban. "I hope that means there could be a change of heart," Hunt said yesterday.

However, the Conference secretary, John Moules, explained that it was common practice to check out grounds of all clubs who had applied for promotion, whether or not they were in a position to go up. He added that there were unspecified "other reasons", apart from the new-club issue, for the promotion ban.

Merthyr have threatened to go to court to secure a place in the GMVC should they win the

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Cousins upset by judging

Ice skating

STEVEN COUSINS produced his best performance of the year in the short programme, but he was disappointed to be given only seventh place at the World Figure Skating Championships in Minneapolis.

"By looking at my marks I think skating first was a disadvantage," the British champion from Chester said on Wednesday night. "I felt a little tired during the early morning practice. But during the competition I skated the best I've skated all year, better than the European Championships in January or even the Winter Olympics. Perhaps the judges were looking the other way."

Cousins' marks ranged from 5.0-5.3 for the required elements and 5.4-5.5 for presentation. The field was headed by Alexei Yagudin and Evgeni Plushenko, the outstanding Russians, and the American pair, Michael Weiss and Todd Eldredge.

Britain's teenaged pairs champions, Marsha Poluniaschenko and Andrew Seabrook, skated creditably to move up two places and finish 13th out of 20 in an event that was won by Russia's Elena Berzhnaya and Anton Sikharulidze.



Rusedski: Plays first match

Britain's duo back in tune for Newcastle

THE manager of a northern football club once attributed his team's run of success to the "great harmonium" in the dressing-room. It was probably of greater significance that the players happened to be in tune during performances.

Come next Thursday, Britain's name ought to be in the draw for September's qualifying round for the World Group of the Davis Cup, another step towards respectability on the tennis courts, thanks to Greg Rusedski and Tim Henman.

Whether the pair will be disposed to salute each other with high fives in the Telewest Arena in Newcastle today, tomorrow and on Sunday remains to be seen. A simple "well done" will suffice if they complete a second victory in nine months against Ukraine.

All appeared to be peaceful and positive yesterday on the eve of the tie, David Lloyd, Britain's captain, emphasising togetherness and Rusedski and Henman blaming the usual suspects, the media, for blowing their tiff into a feud.

Whether Rusedski and Henman form the doubles partnership tomorrow, as they did crucially during Britain's 3-2 win in Kiev last July, is open to speculation. Lloyd, who has nomi-

ated Henman and Neil Broad, the 1996 Olympic Games silver medalists in Atlanta, is allowed to change his mind up to an hour before the rubber against Andrei Medvedev and Dimitri Poljakov, who were defeated at home by Henman and Rusedski in straight sets.

Much depends on the outcome of today's singles matches between Rusedski (No 5 in the world) and Andrei Rybakko (No 525) and Henman (No 15) and Andrei Medvedev (No 27). Favouring a clay court in Kiev, Medvedev defeated both Rusedski and Henman, who, in turn, both prevailed against Rybakko, although Henman was taken to five sets in the opening rubber.

Although home advantage and a fast carpet court ought to give Britain the edge, both teams will be sent to the court with briefings which will no doubt include the time-

honoured reminder that world rankings count for little in Davis Cup matches.

Rusedski defeated Rybakko in straight sets in the concluding rubber in Kiev, and the British No 1's serve, which has been timed at a record 149 mph, is calculated to unhinge even the best returners in the world. This would appear to leave the 25-year-old Rybakko with little to lose except perhaps his head.

Careless thoughts can cost ties. British teams only need to be nudged about the Romanian Razvan Sabau's escapology on a grass court at Didsbury, Manchester, in July 1994. The 1993

Wimbledon junior champion was aged 17 and ranked No 787 when he recovered from two sets and 1-5 down to save three match points before defeating Jeremy Bates (No 76) in the opening rubber.

Sabau went on to defeat Mark Petchey in the fifth set of the fifth rubber to consign Britain to Group Two of the Euro-African Zone, their lowest point since the Davis Cup was inaugurated in 1900.

With rehabilitation in sight, this is no time to get tight. Today (2pm): Greg Rusedski v Andrei Rybakko; Tim Henman v Andrei Medvedev. Tomorrow (8.45pm): Henman and Neil Broad v Medvedev and Dimitri Poljakov; Sunday (12.0 noon): Rusedski v Medvedev; Henman v Rybakko.

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Monarchs look to wider market as World League adopts new identity

THE World League of American Football, launched amid much fanfare and hyperbole in 1991, is officially dead. However, that does not mean that the ambitious plans to foster the development of the gridiron game in Europe have failed. Instead, the World League has been renamed the NFL Europe League, a move which may cause initial confusion for die-hard fans, and may mystify the casual observer yet further, but which nevertheless confirms a new closeness between the par-

ent National Football League in the United States and its transatlantic offspring.

Similarly, the London Monarchs, winners of the inaugural World Bowl seven years ago, are no more. Now they are the England Monarchs, and as the name suggests, they will be taking their show on the road. They will play three games at the National Sports Centre at Crystal Palace, beginning tomorrow afternoon against the Frankfurt Galaxy, but will then play matches in Bristol and Birmingham before returning to their London bases.

"It makes sense to take the Monarchs to the country, and I think that's a trend you'll see continuing," said the league's president, Oliver Luck. "It is a move aimed at responding to the many fans we know live outside of the greater London area."

In reality, it is also an attempt to lift attendances at Monarchs

The start of another season brings a further attempt to broaden the appeal of American football in Europe. Nick Halling reports

home games above the 10,000 mark, where they have stubbornly remained since 1995, the year the league returned after a two-season hiatus. In 1991, the year the London franchise were all-conquering, gates at Wembley averaged 40,000; such attendances may be unrealistic now, but Luck is not the only one to be frustrated by a sense of potential unfulfilled.

Of course, a winning team would also help, and after enduring four consecutive losing campaigns, gridiron fans in England have little to shout about. That may change at their training camp in Atlanta last month, the Monarchs looked impressive, with Wally Richardson, on loan from the NFL's Baltimore Colts, looking the part at quarterback. Equally promising is the

running back Shon Mitchell, a player who has attracted the attention of the San Francisco 49ers. If Mitchell maintains the form he showed in Georgia, the Monarchs should prove quite a handful.

Elsewhere, the Galaxy have a new coach in Dick Curi, while stability has been the watchword for the Scottish Claymores, Amsterdam Admirals, and Rhein Fire, all of whom will be hoping to relieve the Barcelona Dragons of their title. All six teams will wear designs which

were thought to appeal to Continental tastes.

It may have a new name and a fresh look for its franchisees, but NFL Europe retains its sense of optimism. "We're well past being concerned with the short-term," Luck said. "No dependence on attendances. Thanks to a significant growth in sponsorship and television revenues, our gates, while still important, are not as critical as they were two or three years ago. This promises to be our best season to date."

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Wenger's admiration for Adams

Football
By Phil Casey

ARSENAL WINGER believes his captain, Tony Adams, can remain the linchpin of Arsenal's quest for success – possibly even after his playing career is over.

The England defender's return from injury in January has coincided with the club's re-emergence as title challengers and their run to Sunday's FA Cup semi-final with Wolves.

And Wenger hinted that Adams may have a role to play off the pitch at Highbury as well when he eventually retires. The former Monaco manager realises the importance of such continuity, having relied heavily on the advice and knowledge of his coach, Pat Rice.

Wenger said: "Without Pat I would have made many mistakes. He knows the spirit of the club, so I would say it's important to have players like Tony at the club. One day it will be important

for the club to keep one or two of these players in order to keep this kind of spirit. There's great spirit in the team and a togetherness and a feeling of achieving something together. People who've played together for 10 years have something special between them. When I arrived here, I quickly got the feeling that Arsenal has a special spirit and these experienced players are responsible for it."

Adams is equally complimentary about the Frenchman's influence and has the highest respect for the part Wenger has played in prolonging his career.

The 31-year-old said: "We're talking about my contract. These things will take care of themselves, but I'm happy just playing football for this club. Arsène Wenger is a very intelligent man. He sometimes may appear detached and aloof, but he is watching. Some people with fear and insecurity could take that the wrong way if they're not confident, but he's impressed

me with his knowledge and his great insight into other people.

"He's pointed out a few things to help me with my self-awareness, which I've realised can help me. He's an honest man. I think between us we've extended my career. He's given me every chance to do so. The way I was going there was not going to be much life left in me."

The renewal of Adams' partnership with Martin Keown, Lee Dixon and Nigel Winterburn in the Arsenal defence has played

a major role in the club's excellent recent form. However, they will have to do without Dixon on Sunday, as the right-back is ruled out by a hamstring injury.

Wenger has several other major injury problems and admitted it would need "a miracle" for his striker Ian Wright to make the starting line-up.

"I believe in miracles," the Arsenal boss quipped. "After all, Lourdes is in France! Maybe we have to go there before Sunday. If I had to make a choice to-

day, I would say he won't play, but I can't say definitely no. He has such a big desire to play. He was very down to start with, but at the moment he's happy because he thinks he's not far away."

The Dutch winger Marc Overmars is rated highly doubtful after picking up an ankle injury in the 1-0 win at Bolton on Tuesday, but Gilles Grimandi, who also injured his ankle at the Reebok Stadium, should be fit. Wren's way, page 30

Wembley to be sold for £103m

THE English National Stadium Trust has won its bid to buy Wembley Stadium and now will launch plans for a £200m redevelopment.

A statement from Wembley plc released yesterday said: "Wembley is pleased to announce it has agreed in principle to sell the Wembley Stadium to the English National Stadium Trust for a cash consideration of £103 million." The ENST's bid was backed by the United Kingdom Sports Council and the Football Association.

The Football Association's press officer, Steve Double, said that it has been "expected" that the English National Stadium Trust would win the bid to buy Wembley Stadium. "This has always been our declared intention," he said.

Leicester offered ground by fan

LEICESTER CITY have been offered a site for a new 40,000-seat stadium – free of charge. Lifetime Leicester fan Tom Wheatcroft has held detailed talks with the club about the site although its location has not been specified.

Wheatcroft, who owns Donington Park race track, said: "I will give away the land for free because I want everyone to enjoy sport and I want to help. There would be no benefit for me but I've held two meetings with the club and it's an ideal spot."

The club have been considering leaving Filbert Street, their home since 1891, with capacity there limited to 22,500.

Wales expect to announce today that their opening European Championship match with Italy will be played at Anfield. The FA of Wales Council met this week to discuss where to play their group matches, with the National Stadium in Cardiff unavailable while it is being rebuilt.

The FAW was acutely aware of the campaign being waged to have all the group matches played in Wales, despite the fact that none of the three main grounds – Ninian Park, Vetch Field and the Racecourse Ground – could handle more than 13,000 fans.

But the FAW, who made just £100,000 from the recent Jamaica friendly at Ninian Park, know they could top £500,000 at a major English ground for the Italy match on 5 September.



Full stretch: Cyfor Malta and jockey Tony McCoy, who last week passed Peter Scudamore's record of 221 winners in a season, sprint away from Becher's Brook on their way to victory in the John Hughes Chase during the first day's racing over the Aintree fences yesterday

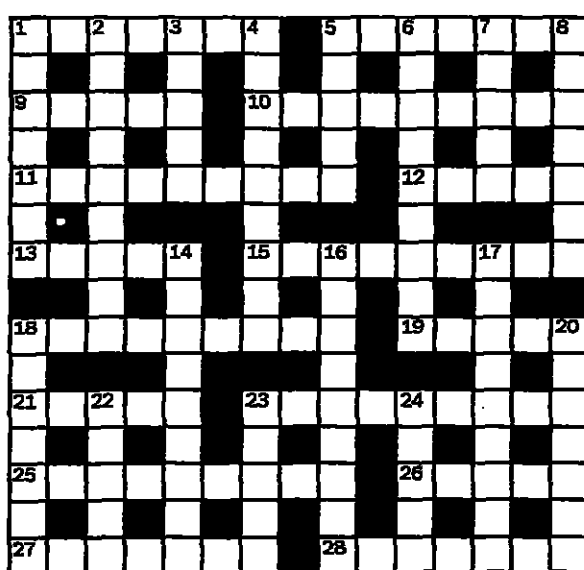
Photograph: John Giles/PA

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3575, Friday 3 April

By Mass

Thursday's solution



- ACROSS**
- Seafood to gather in, clinging to lines (7)
 - They tackle questions (the easy ones) (7)
 - Shops around France for means of transport (5)
 - A fighter, one maintains (9)
 - Complete pit in Wales becoming derelict (9)
 - Russian doesn't quite make back exit (5)
 - Decline to return low Diamond (5)
 - Instrument, a string one, deployed in study (9)
 - He's on guard in more senses than one? (9)
 - A regime places round East rejected (3-2)
 - Secure among faithful at church (5)
 - Put it on said mare that's well-trained (9)
 - Noise made by a duck, note, in general (9)
 - Cut a dash during drill (5)
 - Toy runs into frisky kitten (7)
 - Bore? Agreed (7)
- DOWN**
- Thoroughfare reportedly rough and littered (7)
 - Not in the pink, but blue (3-6)
 - Story contains a great deal of artful material (5)
 - Shouldered implement – and a second (9)
 - Divine vision (5)
 - Jewels and rest scattered outside a safe (9)
 - Plant producing European articles (5)
 - Shaw's lead given to encourage one in the theatre (7)
 - Fling satisfies hunger with fellow diving into meat (9)
 - Made entry (Act 1) with confidence (9)
 - Used strategy and produced loads of interest (9)
 - Cloth's in a state, not entirely tailored (7)
 - Is this what professors are supposed to do? (7)
 - Feature of lost empire (Roman times) (5)
 - Tenor in mass (5)
 - Full taste, but lacking head (5)

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Dallaglio keeps focus on the world stage

Rugby Union
By Chris Hewett

GRAND SLAMS and Triple Crowns may have exercised the imaginations of great England sides of the past, but the current national captain's horizons extend a good deal further than the unfulfilling confines of European rugby. Judging by his forthright comments yesterday, Lawrence Dallaglio is not remotely sure that the completion of a fourth successive Crown against the Irish at Twickenham tomorrow would be an achievement worthy of celebration.

Defeat by a half-baked Irish side testering dangerously on the rim of a large pot of whitewash would wound Dallaglio more than anyone, if only because he has to answer for his ambitious team's occasional blips and blunders. But deep down, he regards much of the rugby played in the Five Nations as prehistoric and the Irish, in particular, as dangerous but ultimately unsophisticated dinosaurs.

"It's for other people to judge what a Triple Crown may or may not mean but as far as I'm concerned, England sides have won Slams and Crowns before," he said. "This team is looking to achieve new things, things that no English side has ever managed. Our only objective is to regularly compete with the major forces in world rugby and

that means surviving and thriving against the southern hemisphere nations. I want to beat Ireland of course, but I want us to win in a style that suggests we can stack up against the best."

"I'd be lying if I said there was no distinction between the pace and intensity of our matches against the southern hemisphere teams before Christmas and the Five Nations games we have played since. The emphasis down south is on positive rugby and we're going to learn a lot about ourselves when we go to Australia, New Zealand and South Africa this summer. The Five Nations is different and in my view, playing rugby at Five Nations pace is not the way to compete at the very top level."

Dallaglio acknowledged that "two different games" were now in progress on either side of the equator and focused much of his attention on the vast discrepancies in refereeing interpretations. "I don't mean this as a criticism of the referees concerned, but England against Wales under Colin Hawke [a New Zealander] had little in common with England against Scotland under Clayton Thomas [a Welshman]. It's a situation a team has to come to terms with if it wants to develop and it will be particularly important come the World Cup, when referees of differing styles are involved in the same tournament."

Another Welshman, Derek

Bevan, will control tomorrow's match and his views on what is and is not permissible, particularly at the set-piece and the breakdown, may well dictate the quality of the English performance. "No player in this squad even thinks about getting involved in an old-fashioned dog-fight," Dallaglio insisted, but he knows better than most that if the Irish receive an inch of latitude from the man with the whistle, they will help themselves to a further mile's worth.

"The Irish seem to be functioning better away from home than they do at Lansdowne Road and they've drawn considerable confidence from Warren Gatland's appointment as coach," the captain said. "They'll be strong in an area of huge influence in all international matches these days; both Keith Wood and Paul Wallace forced places in the Lions Test front row last summer and as a result, they will not feel inhibited or overawed by the perceived power of the English pack."

"But we've made a good deal of progress in certain areas since drawing with Australia and New Zealand before Christmas and while no side gets things all its own way and attacks for 80 minutes in Test rugby, we'll be looking to do everything at the pace that suits us. And that pace will be high, I promise you."

Bateman's difficult decision, Saracens sign Penaud, page 28

"Seeing those two wings reminds me, pass the Hen."



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